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Goulburn Valley Water Solar Farm - Seymour

Application for a planning permit

22 April 2024

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→ The Power of Commitment



Our ref: 12579414

22 April 2024

Department of Transport and Planning
Hannah Wright - Senior Planner (Renewables)
1 Spring Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

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Goulburn Valley Water Solar Farm - Seymour

Dear Hannah

GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) has prepared this planning report on behalf of Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) to support this application for a planning permit to construct a solar farm (the Project) at 190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour.

A planning permit is required to use and develop the land for a renewable energy facility pursuant to the Mitchell Planning Scheme (the Scheme).


This application details the proposal and provides an assessment of the Project against the relevant provisions of the Scheme. Details of the application for a planning permit are set out in the planning report below and includes the following documentation:

- *Attachment 1: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*
- *Attachment 2: Solar Glare Assessment Report*
- *Attachment 3: Traffic Impact Assessment*
- *Attachment 4: Cultural Heritage Due Diligence Assessment*
- *Attachment 5: Ecology Assessment*
- *Attachment 6: Development Plans*
- *Attachment 7: Land Titles*

Due to the recent gazettal of VC261 on 4th April 2024, clause 53.22 – Significant Economic Development now applies to this Project as it meets the condition as per clause 53.22-1.

I look forward to receiving a positive response to the Project and please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below if you have any queries.

Regards





Jocelyn Blair
Town Planner

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Attachment 3	Goulburn Valley Water Solar Farm Seymour – Traffic Impact Assessment
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Attachment 6	Development plans
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1. Introduction

This application for a planning permit has been prepared by GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) on behalf of Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) for a proposed land use and works associated with the proposed solar energy facility (solar farm) at the existing Seymour Wastewater Management Facility WMF (WMF) site at 190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour. The national electricity transmission network will receive all power that is generated by the solar farm on the GVW owned site.

This application details the Project and provides an assessment against the relevant provisions of the Scheme including the recently gazetted updated clause 53.22 to include a renewable energy facility.

1.1 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this planning report is to accompany an application for a planning permit for use and works associated with a solar energy facility. It provides an overview of the works proposed and an assessment against the relevant provisions of the Scheme.

A summary of the application details is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Overview of application

Planning details	Response
Address of land	190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660
Parcel details	45A1\PP3532, 44A1\PP3532, 1\TP709849, 44B\PP3532, 45A2\PP3532, 45B1\PP3532, 2\PS428369
Approximate site coordinates	37.006854, 145.174024
Zone	Clause 36.01 - <i>Public Use Zone 1 (Service and Utility) (PUZ1)</i>
Overlays	Clause 42.02 Schedule 1 Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO1) Clause 44.06 Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
Particular provisions	Clause 52.06 - <i>Car Parking</i> Clause 52.17 - <i>Native Vegetation</i> Clause 53.13 - <i>Renewable Energy Facility</i> Clause 53.22 - <i>Significant Economic Development</i>
Planning permit triggers	Clause 36.01 - <i>Public Use Zone</i> for use and buildings and works associated with a solar energy facility. Clause 42.02 - <i>Vegetation Protection Overlay</i> to remove, destroy or lop any native vegetation. Clause 52.17 - <i>Native Vegetation</i> to remove, destroy or lop any native vegetation, including dead vegetation.
Applicant details	Goulburn Valley Region Water Authority
Contact person	Jocelyn Blair Town Planner GHD Level 8, 180 Lonsdale Street Melbourne VIC 3000 Tel: 8651 9277 Jocelyn.Blair@ghd.com

2. Project details

This section describes the context and proposed use and works in detail, including proposed siting, design, construction, and operation details.

2.1 Project background

In a press release in November 2021, GVW pledged their commitment to the United Nations backed 'The Race to Zero' initiative, dedicated to committing to net-zero emission targets by 2050. GVW are contributing to this commitment by attempting to source all electricity from renewable sources by 2025.

The construction of the Seymour solar farm is essential in ensuring that GVW meets the net-zero emission target and fulfil their pledge to source electricity from renewable energy sources.

GVW are seeking to install a 5MW solar farm system within GVW owned land with generated power being directly exported to the national electricity transmissions network. The solar farm is required to enable GVW to reach their carbon reduction targets and support Victoria's renewable energy and net-zero emissions targets.

2.1.1 Background context

The energy sector is rapidly growing and currently contributes to two-thirds of Victoria's emissions. The Victorian Government has published several guidelines and strategies to support households and businesses in transitioning to renewable energy sources.

2.1.1.1 Renewable Energy Action Plan (DEECA 2017)

The Renewable Energy Action Plan 2017 sets out a guideline to ensure affordable, reliable, and renewable energy is delivered across Victoria. Relevant targets established within the Action Plan include:

- *Increasing energy generation by 40 per cent by 2025*
- *Supporting commercial investments that aim to provide Victoria with at least 40MW of battery storage and over 100MWh of capacity*

2.1.1.2 Victoria's Climate Change Strategy (DEECA 2021)

Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2021 is a strategic document developed by the Victorian Government which seeks to guide Victoria's transition to net-zero emissions by 2050. Key actions outlined within the plan include:

- *Supporting the transformation of the electricity system with renewable energy*
- *Expanding skills and jobs for Victorians*
- *Supporting next generation energy, including batteries and offshore wind power*

2.1.1.3 Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (DELWP 2022) (SEFDDG)

The SEFDDG is a key resource for this Project as it provides an overview of the policy, legislative, and statutory planning requirements for solar energy facility projects in Victoria.

The Guidelines provide a decision guideline for planning permit applications for renewable energy facilities. The Guidelines are intended to assist responsible authorities and stakeholders who provide advice and consider the appropriateness of a solar energy facility in any given location.

Planning components of the SEFDDG

The SEFDDG propose that the following relevant Clauses from the Scheme are considered:

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- Clause 12.01-1S Protection of biodiversity
- Clause 12.01-2S Native vegetation management
- Clause 13.02-1 Bushfire planning
- Clause 14.01-01S Protection of agricultural land
- Clause 15.03-2S Aboriginal cultural heritage

These Clauses have been analysed in detail in section 6.4 of this report.

The SEFDDG notes that if a site is located within the BMO, a referral to a relevant fire management authority may be required as part of the planning permit application process. Please refer to section 6.5.2 for discussion of the requirements and considerations that may be applicable to development within the BMO and Bushfire Prone Area (BPA).

Best practice for proponents

This Project has considered the best practice for proponents of the SEFDDG by engaging stakeholders in the design and development process. Please see section 3 of this report for a detailed response of stakeholder engagement in this Project. The Project also responds to best practice in the design stage of the SEFDDG. Table 2 demonstrates that the design stages have been considered.

Table 2 Best practice for proponents documents

Design stage	Document	Attachment
Landscape screening	Landscape Visual Impact Assessment	Attachment 1
Glint and Glare Assessment	Glare Assessment	Attachment 2
Traffic Impacts	Traffic Assessment	Attachment 3

2.2 Proposed works

The proposed works involve the installation of a 5MW solar energy facility. The preferred location for the solar panels is in the west of the study site, just north of the existing water detention pond.

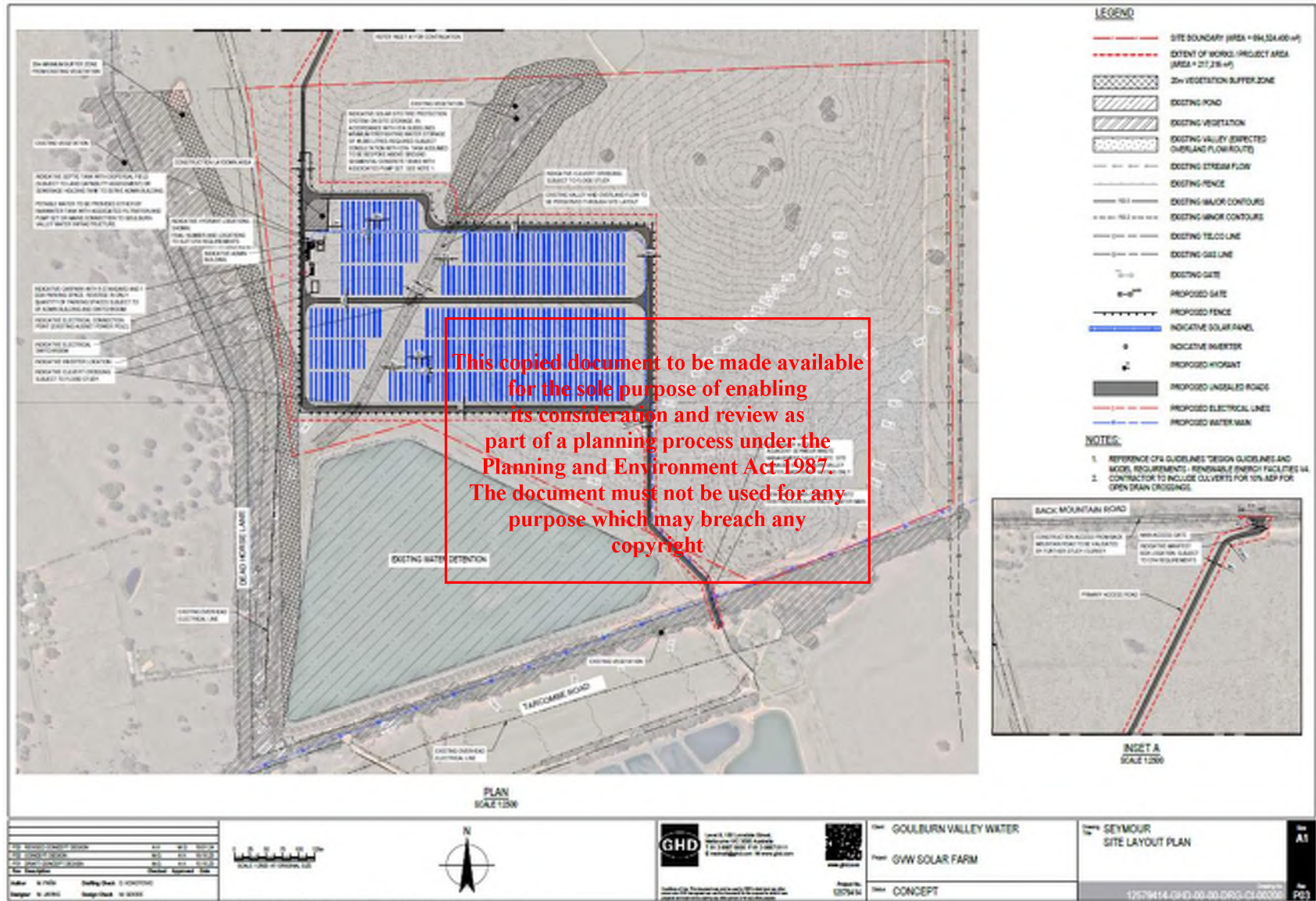
Access to the development will be provided from Black Mountain Road. An alternative access will be provided from Tarcombe Road via the existing Seymour Waste Management Facility access.

The Project will include a large-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) generation plant, high voltage (HV) infrastructure integration and reticulation systems comprising of the following:

- Fixed tilt or Single Axis Tracking (SAT) PV arrays located within GVW land
- Power stations comprising of inverters, transformers, ring main units, controls, communication systems, AC/DC reticulation and other balance of plant
- Control and switching room building
- Associated civil and structural works at the Solar Farm
- Integration into the DNSP electrical network including HV cabling (above and underground), conduits, pits
- Meteorological station
- Access roads & pavement
- Provision of six on-site car parking spaces, including one accessible parking space
- Landscaping (extent and location to be confirmed)
- Security fencing at all perimeter boundaries to restrict access

Additional ancillary works associated with the solar farm include the installation of electrical lines, water mains, hydrants, fences and gates (this area where works will occur is referred to as the study site in this report). Figure 1 is a concept plan showing the location of the proposed works within the affected parcels of land, which are also shown in Attachment 6.

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Figure 1 Location plan showing Project layout within study site

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2.3 Site context

The Seymour solar farm site will be bounded by roads on three sides, Tarcombe Road to the south, Dead Horse Lane to the west and Back Mountain Road to the north. The eastern boundary is a dirt track boundary with open grassy fields to the east. The study site is located approximately 1 kilometre to the north-east of the Seymour township.

The landscape around the study site is rural in character, characterised by lightly treed grassy paddocks and agricultural landscapes. The town of Seymour is nearby to the southeast of the site, with suburban style blocks on its outskirts nearest to the site.

Figure 2 shows the location of the solar farm within the larger landscape.

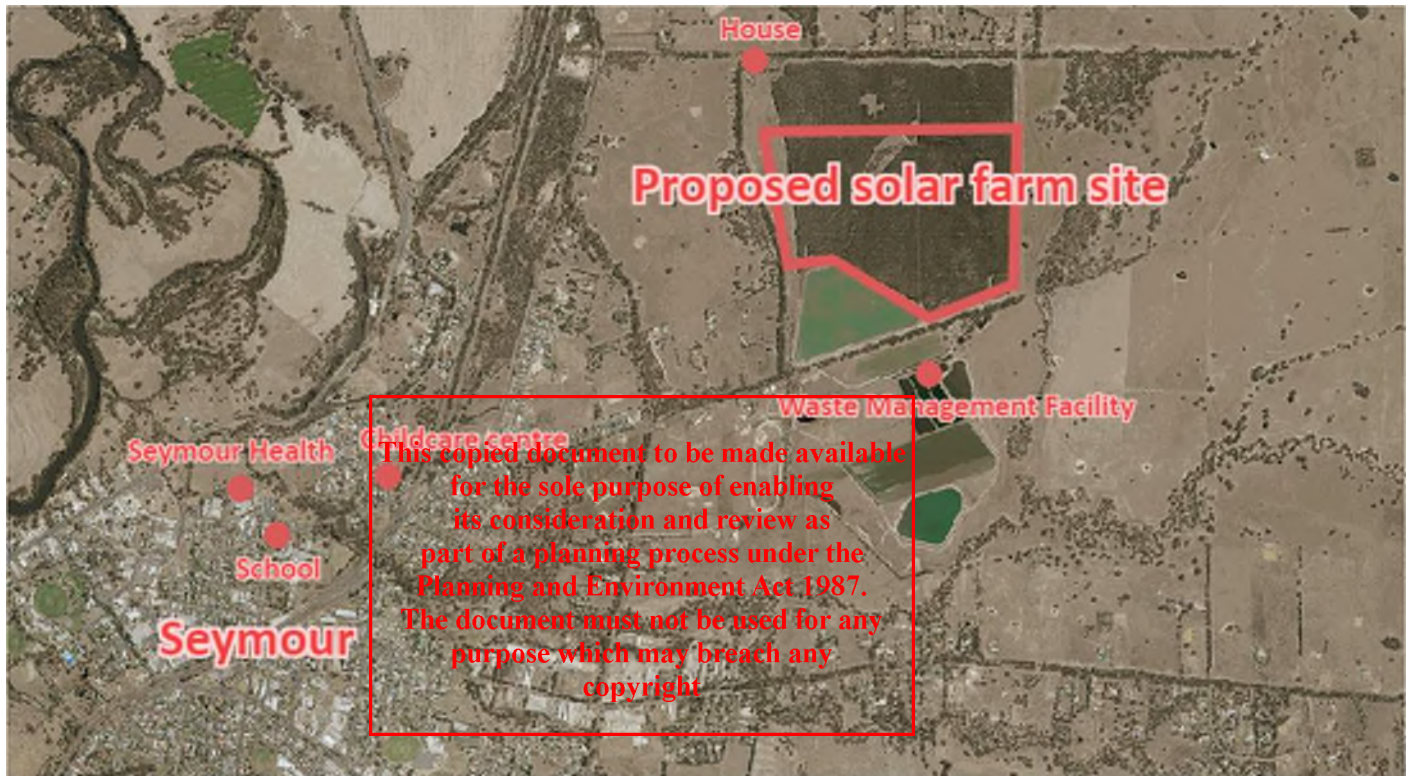


Figure 2 Seymour site location

The study site is generally flat, and was previously used for plantation trees, but is now largely cleared of vegetation. The aerial photo in Figure 2 above was taken prior to the clearing of the plantation trees. There is a dam in the middle of the site with some existing vegetation around it, with overland flows to the south-west. The site has a gradual fall towards the natural valley of the Goulburn River and ascends towards the Tallarook Ranges to the south and Mount Stewart to the east. Property boundaries in the vicinity are characterised by wire boundary fences.

Table 3, outlines the nearest facilities to the study site.

Table 3 Context of the study site

Facility	Key sites	Distance
Education	St. Mary's College	1.28 kilometres
	Naurelle Sherwood Family Day Care	2.115 kilometres
Activity Centre	Seymour township	1 kilometre
Emergency Services	Seymour Fire Station	4.52 kilometres
Transport	Puckapunyal Airport	10 kilometres
Residential Dwelling	70 Back Mountain Road	270 metres

2.3.1 Land tenure

The use and development for the solar farm will be contained within multiple land parcels owned by GVW. Details of the land tenure are provided in **Error! Reference source not found.**

A copy of the land titles is available at Attachment 7.

Table 4 Details of Land Tenure

Address of land	Parcel number	Landowner	Any easements, encumbrances etc.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	45A1\PP3532	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	None.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	44A1\PP3532	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	None.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	1\TP709849	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	Covenant as to part G046058.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	44B\PP3532	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	None.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	45A2\PP3532	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	None.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	45B1\PP3532	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	None.
190 Back Mountain Road, Seymour, 3660	2\PS428369	Goulburn Valley Region Water Corporation of 104-110 Fryers Street Shepparton VIC 3630.	None.

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Figure 3 to Figure 5 are recent photographs taken at the site.



Figure 3 Back Mountain Road near Dead Horse Lane existing view

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Figure 4 *Dead Horse Lane existing view*



Figure 5 *Tarcombe Road existing view of south-west corner of the site*

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3. Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders, including the community, Taungurung people and Taungurung Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) and relevant government bodies (see below) were consulted to support the preparation of the project planning process and inform the project's development and understanding of potential impacts.

In accordance with the SEFDDG, government agencies such as The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and The Country Fire Authority (CFA) have been engaged with the planning aspect of this Project. These key stakeholders have collectively provided confidence that the Project and positioning of the solar panels is appropriate in the context of planning controls. Table 5 summarises the stakeholder engagement.

Table 5 Stakeholder engagement summary

Stakeholder	Engagement	Feedback	Date
DEECA CFA	Pre-application meeting	The CFA didn't propose any changes to the works and were generally comfortable with the scope. The DEECA provided confidence that the Project was appropriate.	14.12.2023
DEECA	Ecology meeting	Discussed the results of the ecology site visit, no changes required by DEECA.	12.01.2024
Tuangurung RAP	Stakeholder engagement	Projected no concerns raised. One member of the RAP noted they had previously visited the site as part of an inspection of another project at the Seymour wastewater facility.	18.9.2023 and 27.2.2024
Landowner of 240 Tarcombe Road	Stakeholder engagement	Nobody was home when they were contacted.	
Landowner of 15 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	Good idea, supported.	
Landowner of 70 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	Nobody was home when they were contacted.	
Landowner of 115 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	No concerns about solar.	
Landowner of 135 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	No concerns about solar.	
Landowner of 155 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	Concerned with the proposed works, particularly the size and location of the solar facility.	
Landowner of 175 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	No concerns about solar.	
Landowner of 185 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	Nobody was home when they were contacted.	
Landowner of 195 Dead Horse Lane	Stakeholder engagement	Nobody was home when they were contacted.	

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4. Environmental and design considerations

4.1 Heritage

4.1.1 Aboriginal cultural heritage

The study site is not within an area of Aboriginal cultural heritage. A Cultural Heritage Due Diligence Assessment (CHDDA) undertaken by GHD in 2023 found that the property is not within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity as defined by the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, and there are no known Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) registered Aboriginal places within the site. There are no Victorian Heritage Register places or Victorian Heritage Inventory places, nor are there any Heritage Overlays within the study site.

Figure 6 shows the areas of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity in the vicinity of the site.

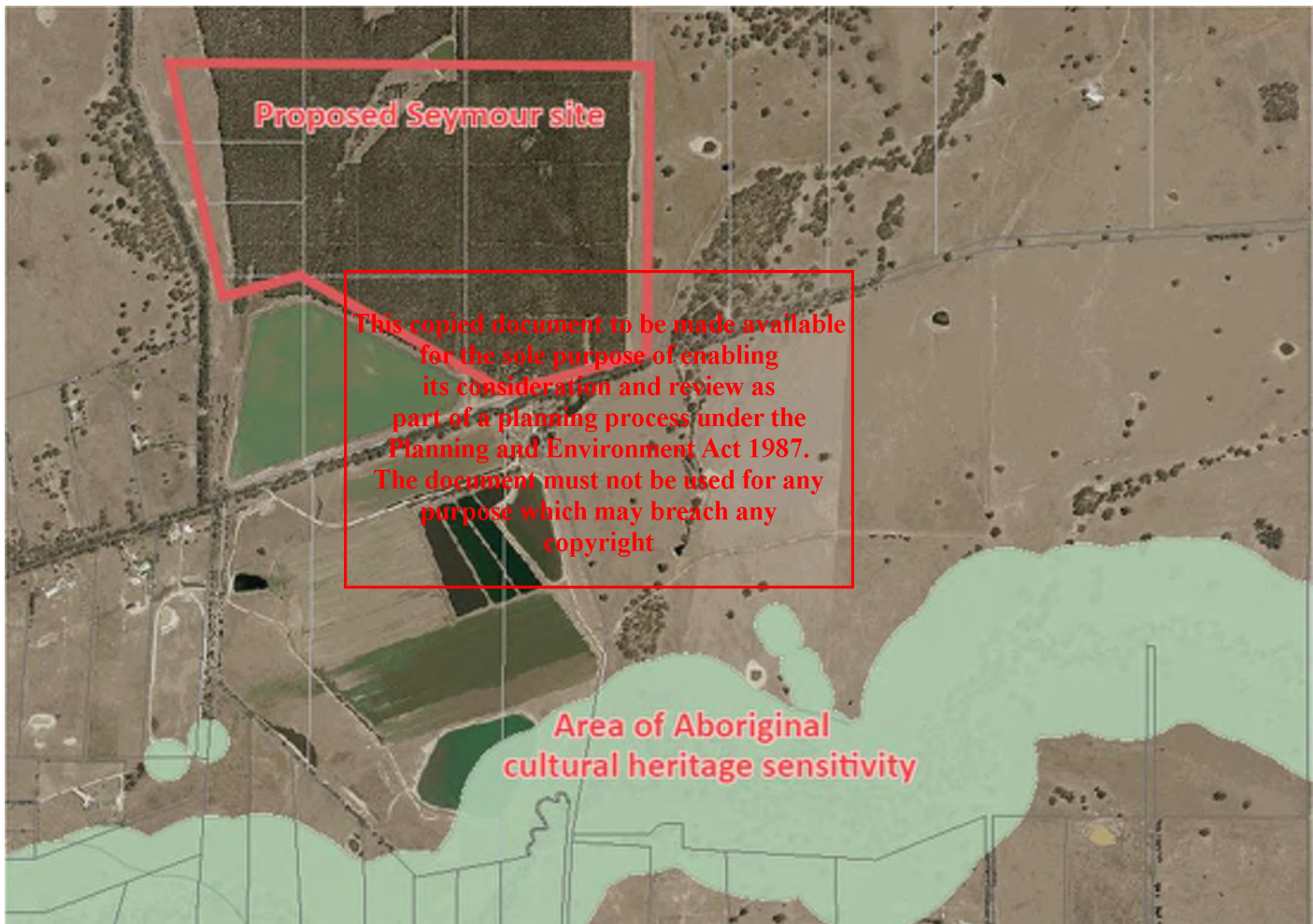


Figure 6 Area of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity

The CHDDA conducted by GHD concluded that there are no statutory approvals required for heritage matters under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*, *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, and *Heritage Act 2017*. Table 6 demonstrates that there are no legislative heritage requirements applicable to this Project.

A copy of the CHDDA has been provided at Attachment 4.

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Table 6 Heritage legislation

Legislation / Policy	Relevance to project
EPBC Act	No approvals for the proposed works are required under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act) for heritage matters. Please note that this does not include approval requirements under the EPBC Act for any other matters of National Environmental Significance.
Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006	The study area is not within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity (CHS) and therefore, a mandatory CHMP is not required.
Heritage Act 2017 and Planning and Environment Act 1987	No heritage related approvals for the proposed works are required under the <i>Heritage Act 2017</i> or the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> . There are no places listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory, or the Victorian Heritage Register, and there are no Heritage Overlays present within the study area.

4.2 Ecology assessment

A site visit was undertaken by GHD ecologists in December 2023.

A summary of the findings is provided below, with the complete report provided at Attachment 5. The Ecology assessment considered a study area of 10 km radius surrounding the study site (study area). The key findings include:

- The majority of the site consists of former Blue Gum plantation including unsealed access tracks. The plantation was harvested and cleared in 2021 as the treatment of wastewater was no longer required. The majority of the study site is highly disturbed as a result of the Blue Gum removal. Some areas were mulched and are dominated by regrowth, whereas areas without mulch lack regrowth and are mostly dominated by a mix of native and introduced ground covers and scattered native shrubs. Long-narrow piles of woody debris and scattered remains (e.g. tree stumps, root and trunks) of plantation material are common across the site.

Native vegetation

- The field assessment identified several patches of Box Ironbark Forest (Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) 61) within the roadside reserve, with some small patches extending past the boundary fence into the property. The patches of this EVC along the northern boundary of the parcel were generally higher quality, with several large canopy trees and a diverse understory of native shrubs. Other patches, mapped as a second habitat zone, were generally lower quality, with minimal large trees and a significantly disturbed understory with sparse native shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Within the Central Victorian Uplands (CVU) bioregion, this EVC is listed as Vulnerable.
- The field assessment also confirmed patches of highly disturbed, derived form of EVC 55 Plains Grassy Woodland within the study area. This EVC occurred amongst the plantation regrowth where coppicing *Eucalyptus globulus* subsp. *globulus* facilitated the regeneration of some native graminoids and shrubs. Plains Grassy Woodland is listed as Endangered within the CVU bioregion.
- One additional EVC (EVC 125 Plains Grassy Wetland) was also confirmed in the field assessment. This EVC occurred in damp drainage lines created by the removal of tree stumps and irrigation systems from the plantation. Species richness in these patches was generally low, dominated by native sedges, rushes, and sparse native forbs. This EVC is listed as Endangered within the CVU bioregion.
- In total, four habitat zones were mapped within the study site.
- The remaining area within the parcel contained some scattered native plants but, as a result of the disturbance caused by timber harvesting, was generally dominated by introduced species and contained significant patches of bare ground. A patch of planted vegetation was also present towards the north of the site, which included *Eucalyptus polyanthemos* (Red Box) and *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* subsp. *pruinosa* (Yellow Gum).
- A total of 0.179 ha of vegetation is proposed to be impacted by the works.

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Threatened and protected flora

- No flora species or ecological communities listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) or the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act) were observed during the site assessment within the study site or proposed development area.
- Ten (10) flora species listed as protected under the FFG Act were observed during the site assessment. These include:
 - *Acacia acinacea s.l.* (Gold Dust Wattle)
 - *Acacia mearnsii* (Black Wattle)
 - *Acacia paradoxa* (Hedge Wattle)
 - *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle)
 - *Acacia verniciflua* (Varnish Wattle)
 - *Cassinia aculeata subsp. aculeata* (Common Cassinia)
 - *Cassinia sifton* (Drooping Cassinia)
 - *Laphangium luteoalbum* (Jersey Cudweed)
 - *Senecio quadridentatus* (Cotton Fireweed)
 - *Xerochrysum viscosum* (Sticky Everlasting)

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Noxious weeds

- Four weed species listed under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act), one of which is also a Weed of National Significance (WoNS), were recorded within the study site.

Fauna

- No fauna species listed as threatened under the EPBC Act or the FFG Act were observed during the site assessment within the study site or proposed development area; however, three threatened duck species including the Blue-billed Duck, Musk Duck, Hardhead (all listed as vulnerable under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*) were observed within the pondage south of the study site, outside of the development area. The three duck species are unlikely to occur within the study site because of the absence of suitable habitat. Whilst it is possible that each species may occasionally occur within the study site because of its proximity to the preferred habitat, it is unlikely they will depend upon or regularly occur or utilise the habitats of the study site, particularly the development area.
- There are 15 threatened fauna species that may occur and utilise the various habitats within the development area. Three additional threatened fauna species may utilise habitat within the broader study site but are unlikely to use habitat within the development area. For the majority of these species the impacts are unlikely to be substantial or require additional assessment because:
 - The habitat is restricted to the remnant roadside vegetation and the area of impact is small (e.g. area of impact is restricted to 5 trees within 0.179 ha of EVC 61 Box Ironbark Forest within two road reserves) – for Squirrel Glider, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Brown Treecreeper, Gang-gang Cockatoo and Swift Parrot
 - The habitat is highly modified (e.g. recently cleared Blue Gum plantation with some regrowth) and includes areas of derived habitat (e.g. native grasses regenerated after clearing of plantation). Furthermore, this habitat type is well represented in the broader study site with large areas being retained outside the development area. A number of species may use this habitat and the remnant roadside habitat including: Bearded Dragon, Blue-winged Parrot, Diamond Firetail, Lace Monitor, Little Eagle, Speckled Warbler, Square-tailed Kite, Superb Parrot and Turquoise Parrot.
- It is unlikely that any threatened FFG Act or EPBC Act listed fauna species would rely on or regularly utilise the habitats of the development area. The removal of this habitat is unlikely to comprise a substantial or important portion of habitat for any threatened FFG Act or EPBC Act listed fauna species. The proposed development will not remove or substantially modify any wildlife corridors that would create a barrier to the movement of any of the conservation significant fauna species discussed in this report.
- Potential habitat for the Golden Sun Moth, Striped Legless Lizard and Brown Toadlet occurs outside the development area and are therefore retained and will not be impacted as part of this Project.

4.2.1 Minimisation measures

The following measures should be implemented during the works to avoid and minimise impacts on native vegetation:

- Restrict access tracks to the minimum required for vehicles and machinery needed for the works and operation of the solar facility.
- Allocate parking areas and do not park vehicles or machinery on roadside vegetation outside of the allotted impact area.
- Install No-Go fencing to delineate and protect areas of retained and surrounding native vegetation and fauna habitats

4.2.2 Avoidance measures

The Seymour site was selected for the proposed solar farm facility due to its land-use history as a plantation. Native vegetation is limited to small patches of regrowth that emerged within the parcel after the plantation was decommissioned and trees were harvested. Impacts to remnant vegetation are therefore limited to the widening of access tracks and gates at road reserves at the northern and southern boundaries of the site. This site-level avoidance measure allowed GVW to avoid the impacts that may have occurred on parcels with greater native vegetation cover as a result of different historic usages.

Within the site, three potential layout options for the solar array were considered by GVW, and GHD ecologists provided advice on those options relating to the minimisation of impacts on native vegetation and fauna habitat. These included altering access routes to utilise existing gates, changing the routes of internal roads to avoid large remnant trees, and repositioning the solar array within the site to avoid impacting native vegetation and fauna habitat. As a result of these site-specific avoidance measures, a number of scattered native trees and an area of planted vegetation that provides habitat for native terrestrial fauna will be avoided completely. Roadside vegetation impacts were minimised by utilising existing gates, which only require minor widening to accommodate the larger vehicles used for the construction and operation of the facility.

4.2.3 Ecology assessment recommendations

- Seek endorsement from DEECA for the removal of 0.179 ha of native vegetation including five large canopy trees under the Scheme. Regrowth vegetation within the property is exempt from permit requirements as per the regrowth exemption for regenerating vegetation within the boundaries of a registered timber plantation.
- Apply for and obtain an FFG Act Protected Flora permit prior to the commencement of any construction works for the removal of individuals of the 10 FFG Act-listed protected flora species observed within the works footprint.
- Obtain offsets for the Project prior to commencing work. A total of 0.072 general habitat units (GHU) are triggered for this project with a minimum strategic biodiversity value score of 0.287. These offsets must be sourced from within Mitchell Shire Council or Goulburn Broken CMA area.
- Prior to the works commencing, it is recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is developed and implemented for the Project to further avoid and minimise impacts to ecological values. The CEMP should include provisions relevant to protecting the ecological values identified within the development area and broader study site:
 - Implement measures, such as temporary No-Go Zones, to protect native vegetation to be retained.
 - Incorporate weed, disease, and pest control measures to prevent the spread of existing and/or the introduction of new weeds, diseases, or pests to the study site.
 - Wash-down and inspection of vehicles, machinery, and boots before entering/leaving working areas to avoid transporting viable plant materials or large clods of soil.
- Prior to construction commencing, obtain a Management Authorisation under the *Wildlife Act 1975* to carry out fauna-related mitigation measures if removing any hollow-bearing trees or limbs containing hollows, including salvage, capture, handling, relocation, as required.

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4.2.4 Legislative impacts

Table 7 lists Acts and policies relevant to the Ecology assessment that have been identified as having implications for the Project.

Table 7 *Legislative implications and requirements for the Project*

Legislation / Policy	Relevance to Project	Outcomes
Federal		
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	<p>No EPBC listed flora or fauna species or communities are present within the study site or the road reserves.</p> <p>Up to seven fauna species may utilise habitats within the development area.</p> <p>It is considered unlikely that EPBC listed flora within the study site or road reserves, owing to past disturbance, low quality of native vegetation and habitat, high weed cover and fragmentation of habitat areas.</p> <p>It is unlikely that any EPBC Act listed fauna species would rely on or regularly utilise the habitats of the development area. The removal of this habitat is unlikely to comprise a substantial or important portion of habitat for any EPBC Act listed fauna species. The proposed development will not remove or substantially modify any wildlife corridors that would create a barrier to the movement of any of the conservation significant fauna species discussed in this report.</p> <p>No Ramsar wetlands are expected to be impacted by the proposed works.</p> <p>No species of migratory fauna are expected to use habitats within the study site frequently or regularly or in important or significant numbers.</p>	<p>It is highly unlikely that significant impacts under the EPBC Act would occur as a result of this Project. A referral under the EPBC Act is not required for threatened flora and fauna species, migratory species or ecological communities listed under the EPBC Act.</p> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>This copied document to be made available for the sole purpose of enabling its consideration and review as part of a planning process under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. The document must not be used for any purpose which may breach any copyright</p> </div>
State		
<i>Environment Effects Act 1978 (EE Act)</i>	<p>No flora or fauna species listed as threatened under the FFG Act were present within the study site that need to be considered under the EE Act.</p>	<p>Based on the current footprint and expected or potential impacts on native vegetation and threatened species, the Project is not considered to require a referral under the EE Act for effects on flora and fauna values.</p> <p>It should be noted that the EE Act also includes social, economic, and environmental criteria, which are not considered in this report.</p>
<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987 (P&E Act)</i>	<p>The <i>Planning and Environment Act</i> is addressed through Clause 52.17 of the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP), which stipulates that a permit is required for the removal of native vegetation.</p> <p>The regrowth exemption found in clause 42.02-3 and clause 52.17-7 of the Mitchell planning scheme states that a permit is not required for regrowth within the boundary of a registered timber production plantation.</p>	<p>Based on the proposed works footprint, regrowing native vegetation within the property boundaries will be impacted by the works, but a permit will not be required as per the regrowth exemption.</p> <p>However, there is native vegetation within the road reserves outside the boundaries of the registered timber plantation. If native vegetation in these areas is to be impacted by works, then a planning permit will be required pursuant to clause 52.17 Native Vegetation and clause 42.02 Vegetation Protection Overlay.</p>

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Legislation / Policy	Relevance to Project	Outcomes
<i>Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP 2017) – the Guidelines.</i>	<p>The location mapping for the study site identifies that the study site is classified as Location 2.</p> <p>The Project would follow the intermediate assessment pathway when being assessed under the Guidelines, if native vegetation is proposed to be removed.</p>	<p>If a planning permit is required, it would be assessed under the intermediate assessment pathway.</p> <p>Offsets would be required and need to be secured from the Mitchell Shire LGA or the Goulburn Broken CMA.</p>
<i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act)</i>	<p>No FFG Act listed threatened flora species or communities are likely to be present within the study site or in the adjacent road reserves.</p> <p>10 FFG Act protected flora species were observed during the field assessment.</p> <p>Up to 15 fauna species listed under the FFG Act may utilise habitats within the development area.</p> <p>It is unlikely that any threatened FFG Act listed fauna species would rely on or regularly utilise the habitats of the development area. The removal of this habitat is unlikely to comprise a substantial or important portion of habitat for any threatened FFG Act listed fauna species. The proposed development will not remove or substantially modify any wildlife corridors that would create a barrier to the movement of any of the conservation significant fauna species discussed in this report.</p>	<p>Mitigation measures should be implemented to avoid and minimise the impacts of the project, including protecting native vegetation not proposed to be impacted and preventing Potentially Threatening Processes, e.g., spread of weeds.</p> <p>An FFG permit will be required for removal of 10 FFG Act listed protected flora species within the works footprint.</p> <div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>This copied document to be made available for the sole purpose of enabling its consideration and review as part of a planning process under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. The document must not be used for any purpose which may breach any copyright</p> </div>
<i>Wildlife Act 1975</i>	<p>A Management Authorisation under the Act is required when native fauna need to be relocated during works (e.g., if fauna need to be removed from trenches that are left open or from hollow-bearing trees or limbs to be removed).</p>	<p>Based on the fauna expected to be present at the site and the expected construction techniques, a Management Authorisation is likely to be required to assist fauna that may occupy fauna habitat within the site.</p>
<i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CALP Act)</i>	<p>Four noxious weeds listed under the CaLP Act were observed within the study site.</p> <p>Mitigation measures to prevent the introduction and spread of CaLP Act listed weed species (and any weed species) must be incorporated into the CEMP.</p>	<p>Under this Act, concerted efforts must be taken to avoid spreading or introducing weeds into or out of the study site.</p>

4.3 Traffic assessment

The study site is located within the existing Seymour Wastewater Management Facility (WMF) site along Tarcombe Road, Seymour, approximately 1 kilometre to north-east of the Seymour township area as shown above in Figure 2.

The site is bounded by Back Mountain Road to the north, Dead Horse Lane to the west and Tarcombe Road to the south. The site is adjacent to open rural land to the east.

The complete traffic assessment report is provided at Attachment 3.

4.3.1 Road network

Back Mountain Road

Back Mountain Road is a local road (managed by Mitchell Shire Council) and is aligned in east-west direction (located north of the subject site). It is a dirt road with a localised sealed section at the intersection with Avenel Road. The carriageway has a width of approximately 5.5 metres catering generally for traffic in one direction with

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vehicles slowing down to let vehicles passing in the opposite direction. The carriageway narrows to around 4 metres to the east of the Dead Horse Lane intersection.

Abutting the subject site Back Mountain Road has a posted default speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour.

Footpaths are not available adjacent to Back Mountain Road.

Online traffic data was not available for Back Mountain Road. The road provides local access to residents of up to nine properties. As such, Back Mountain Road expected to carry around 7-8 movements in the peak hour and would likely to generate no more than 70-80 movements per day as a highly conservative estimate.

Dead Horse Lane

Dead Horse Lane is a local road oriented generally north-south on the western side of the study site providing connection between Back Mountain Road to the north and Tarcombe Road to the south.

The carriageway is approximately 4 metres wide with a dirt and gravel surface, operating generally as a single lane road.

In the vicinity of the subject site, Dead Horse Lane has a default speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour.

Footpaths are not available adjacent to Dead Horse Lane.

Publicly available traffic count data is not available for Dead Horse Lane. However, it provides local access to residents for only one property. Considering the local road nature and only servicing a single property, traffic volumes are expected to be very low with no more than 10 traffic movements daily in both directions as a highly conservative assessment.

Tarcombe Road

Tarcombe Road is a local road and is aligned in an east-west direction to the south of the subject site. The road terminates before the entrance of the Seymour Wastewater Management Facility. In the vicinity of the subject site, Tarcombe Road is a dirt road with an approximately 5.5 metre wide carriageway.

Adjacent to the subject site, Tarcombe Road has a posted speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour.

Footpaths are not available adjacent to Tarcombe Road.

Publicly available traffic count data is not available for Tarcombe Road. It provides access to provides local access to residents of up to five properties and the Seymour Waste Management Facility. As such it is estimated to generate 4-5 peak hour movements per hour and would likely carry no more than 40-50 movements per day as a highly conservative assessment.

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4.3.2 Site access and car parking

Site access is being considered from Back Mountain Road. In addition, a secondary site access point is proposed from Tarcombe Road via the existing Seymour Waste Management Facility access to satisfy CFA requirements.

It is proposed to provide a total of six on-site car parking spaces including one accessible parking space. The car parking spaces will be located adjacent to the administration building. Given low traffic movements of approximately five vehicles per week during operation time, six on-site parking spaces is considered satisfactory. Additionally, it is noted that the site will have available open spaces which can be used to accommodate additional on-site parking demand if required.

4.3.3 Construction period

The level of expected construction traffic is not available at this stage. Therefore, a previous traffic impact assessment (TIA) completed by GHD for a solar farm has been referenced to estimate the expected traffic generation for the subject site. The TIA was completed for a 50-60MW solar farm project in Glenrowan West. It was estimated that the site would generate in the order of 330 vehicle movements per day during the peak of the construction period comprising:

- 300 light vehicle movements (two-way); and
- 30 heavy vehicle movements (two-way).

The subject site for this solar farm is about 10% the size of the Glenrowan solar farm site. As such, it is estimated that construction traffic would be around 10% of the traffic that Glenrowan solar farm site was estimated to generate, which equates to in the order of 34 vehicle movements per day during the peak of the construction period including.

- 30 light vehicle movements per day (two-way); and
- 4 heavy vehicle movements (two-way).

4.3.4 Operation period

It is expected that traffic movements will be minimal during operation period. This is limited to staff and routine and emergency maintenance only and expected to be in the order of approximately five vehicles per week. These movements are not considered to have any impact on the surrounding road network.

4.3.5 Traffic distribution

It is expected that all of the estimated construction traffic would use the main access to the site from Back Mountain Road. The alternate access via Tarcombe Road is not planned to be used for construction vehicle movements.

4.3.6 Summary

It is anticipated that proposed development construction activity will generate in the order of 34 vehicle movements per day and is expected to be distributed across Back Mountain Road.

These numbers are considered a maximum (or “worst-case”) scenario, and on some days, traffic volumes will be considerably lower, typically when the site is not expected to be made available for the sole purpose of enabling its consideration and review as part of a planning process under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Overall, this level of traffic is considered to be on the low side and can be adequately accommodated within the surrounding road network capacity without causing detrimental impact to the existing traffic network.

4.4 Solar glare assessment

A solar glare assessment was completed by GHD in early 2024. The assessment focuses on potential repercussions on aviation operations related to Puckapunyal Airport, located approximately 10 kilometres aerial distance from the proposed PV site, and encompasses an examination of runway approach trajectories, as well as analyses potential effects on adjacent receptors, such as road users and the local community.

Between the autumn and spring months, when the sun angle is low in the morning and evening, there is potential for both green and yellow glare for route receptors (representing both light vehicles and heavy vehicles travelling along the nearby roads and rail) and observer points located to the west and south-west of the PV array. Green glare is defined as having a low potential for after-image. Yellow glare creates a potential for after-image, and red glare has the potential to cause permanent eye damage (retinal burn).

Table 8 below summarises the number of flight paths, route receptors and observer points which have been predicted to be impacted by green, yellow and red glare.

Table 8 Summary of receptors and observer points impacted by glare

	Green glare	Yellow glare	Red glare
Flight paths (Puckapunyal airport)	0	0	0
Route receptors (drivers, commuters, pedestrians)	3 locations, combined total of 40.1 hours annually	2 locations, combined total of 3.6 hours annually	0
Observer points	11 locations, combined total of 62.8 hours annually	1 location, total of 1.9 hours annually	0

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A total of 102.9 hours of green glare has been predicted amongst three route receptors and 11 observer points. Green glare has a low potential for after-image and poses little to no threat of damage to the observer during the impacted times.

A total of 5.5 hours of yellow glare is predicted across two route receptors (Avenel and Tarcombe Roads), as well as one observer point (Observer Point 27), a property located approximately 600 meters away from the south-west corner of the proposed PV installation.

Annually it is predicted that 10.1 hours of green glare and 3.3 hours of yellow glare will occur each year along Avenel Road. It is noted that existing vegetation in between these observation points will reduce the impact of glare received at the routes. Hence the glare impact can be considered as relatively low for the whole year.

Annually it is predicted that 16.1 hours of green glare and 20 minutes of yellow glare will occur each year along Tarcombe Road. It is noted that existing vegetation in between these observation points will reduce the impact of glare received at the routes. Hence the glare impact can be considered as relatively low for the whole year.

At Observer Point 27, it is predicted that 5.2 hours of green glare and 1.9 hours of yellow glare will occur annually.

Whilst yellow glare typically has the potential to cause after-image, in the scenarios where yellow glare has been predicted, the retinal irradiance relative to the subtended source angle is relatively low, and thus is borderline classified as 'yellow glare.' Mitigation measures have been suggested to reduce the impact of the glare on road users and property owners, however the risk of developing after-image due to the glare is relatively low.

No red glare is predicted within the vicinity and surrounds of the proposed PV system, thus at any position relative to the proposed array there is no threat of permanent retinal damage to an observer.

4.4.1 Mitigation measures

For the route receptors and observer points where yellow glare is predicted, as summarised in Figure 7 below, GHD recommends the following as mitigation measures:

- Project owners should consult with the community and ensure that community members and visitors are made aware of the potential glare intensity, duration, and occurrence times.
- As a mitigation plan, consider planting vegetation screening or installing glare screening of sufficient height along the sections of Avenel Road and Tarcombe Road where the Solar Glare Hazard Analysis Tool model indicates potential glare impact.
- Consider installing glare screening or planting vegetation in around the buildings in proximity to Observer Point 27 where yellow glare is predicted. Alternatively, screening can be installed at the border of the proposed PV array to mitigate the potential for yellow glare to be observed at Observer Point 27.

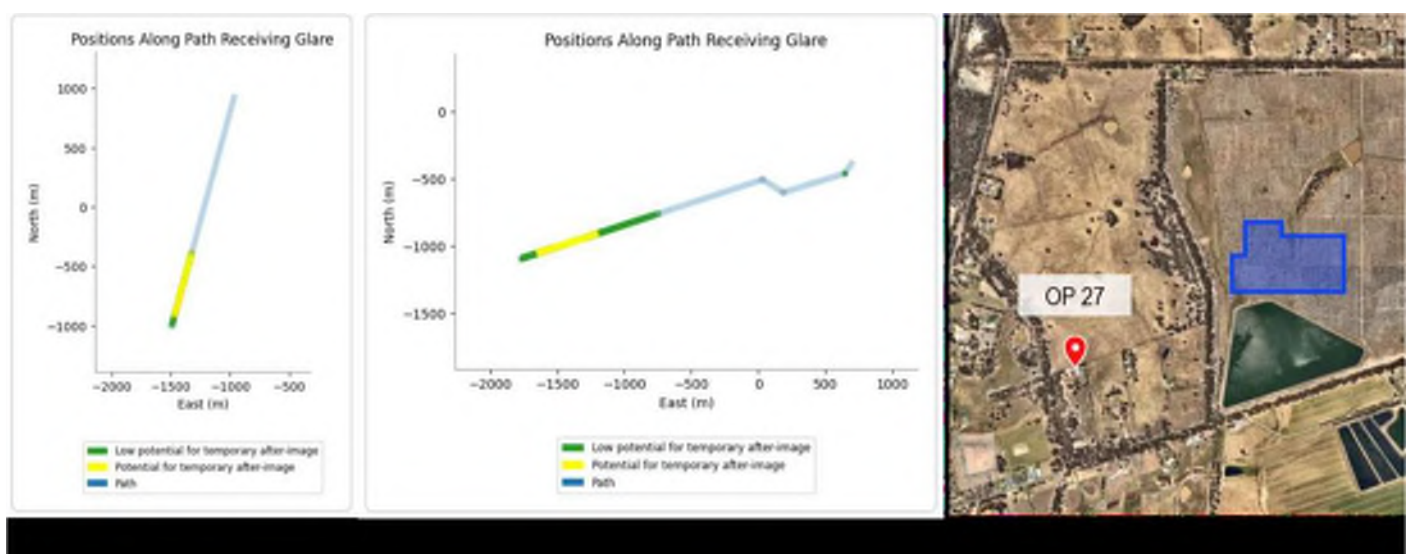


Figure 7 Areas impacted by yellow glare

The solar glare assessment in its entirety is provided at Attachment 2.

4.5 Landscape and visual impact assessment

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was completed by GHD in early 2024 and is provided at Attachment 1. The LVIA identified a total of three landscape character areas within the study area: Seymour Township (LCA1), Farmland (LCA2) and Goulburn River (LCA3). (The study area for this assessment is a 5-kilometre area surrounding the study site including nearby land that has the potential to be indirectly impacted by the Project).

The study site is situated within LCA2. The significance of impacts of the Project on LCA2 are assessed as Low, as it is unlikely that this development would have an adverse effect on the landscape character, and while introduction of components may be new, they would not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape. Overall, this assessment found there to be no significant landscape character impacts from the Project.

4.5.1 Sensitive visual receptors

Sensitive visual receptors in the study area include road users, residents and outdoor workers. A site inspection in late 2023 revealed the likely viewshed for the Project would primarily be confined to areas within close proximity to the study site, such as road users on Back Mountain Road and Dead Horse Lane. The presence of the perimeter windrow planting for weather protection would provide some screening of the Project from these directions.

Key views are typically achieved from open setting locations along the roads adjacent to the study site. Of particular note are the following:

- Local filtered views along Back Mountain Road and Dead Horse Lane and Tarcombe Road
- Likely private filtered views from rural residential areas along Back Mountain Road and Delatite Road
- Likely private distant and filtered views from the residences west of Avenel Road
- Static and direct views from the adjacent GVW WMP facilities

4.5.2 Key visual features

Based on the desktop review and Project site inspection, the key visual features in the study area were identified as:

- The study area is largely influenced by the natural setting of the Goulburn River corridor and its riverine floodplains. The river provides a critical visual reference and link to the history of the township.
- Whiteheads Creek, Back Creek and its tributaries are an important feature of Seymour landscape setting.
- Areas of agricultural land located on the lower lying areas of Goulburn River provide visual contrast to the riverine landscape and in key locations, are an important contributor of the scenic quality of the landscape setting.
- Farmland practices adjacent to the study site mainly comprise of rearing livestock and agricultural cropping with flood plains visually prominent within the vast paddocks. These spaces have a sense of openness with relatively flat topography, allowing for open long views from the adjacent roads.
- Extensive open plains and undulating hills containing remanent native grassland and scattered woodland vegetation.
- Scattered large sheds, warehouses, fencing, silos, and storage areas related to agricultural practices are visible within the open farmland.
- Several irrigation channels cut a deep and narrow gully through the landscape and meandering ephemeral creeks.

Seven viewpoints (sensitive receptor locations) were chosen to assess the visual impact of the Project. The assessment found that the visual impacts ranged from Moderate-Low to Negligible. The most significant impacts were Moderate-Low within the vicinity of viewpoint 02 (Back Mountain Road) and viewpoint 04 (Dead Horse Lane) due to residents who place value upon the open rural landscape and enjoyment of views of their setting. Viewpoint 04 and 05 have the highest level of visual impact.

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Figure 8 shows the location of viewpoint 02. Viewpoint 02 is situated approximately 600 metres (m) from the Project on the corner of Back Mountain Road and Dead Horse Lane and faces southeast. This viewpoint represents road users on Back Mountain Road and Dead Horse Lane, workers, and residents in the residential and farmland areas. While glimpses of views may occur during the construction phase due to the presence of construction vehicles and machinery, it is expected that the overall impact of the Project on viewpoint 02 is assessed as Moderate – Low. The proposed permanent access road would be partially visible; however, it would not be uncharacteristic for the area.

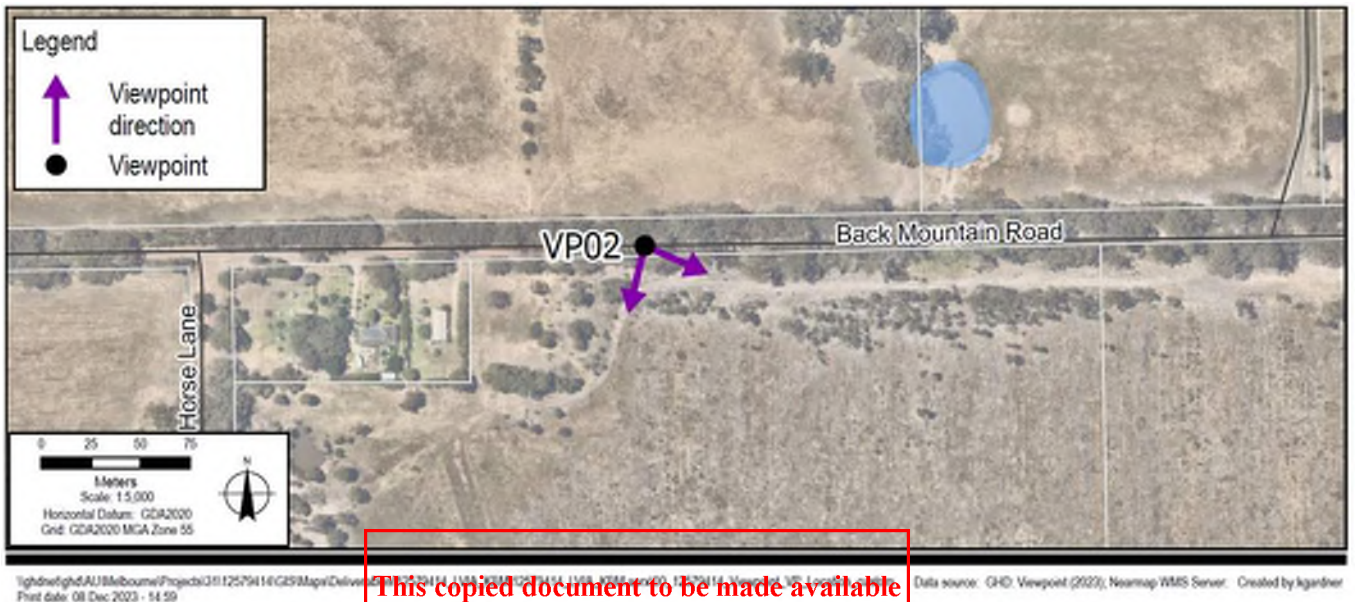


Figure 8 Viewpoint 02 location

Figure 9 shows the existing view from Back Mountain Road near Dead Horse Lane



Figure 9 Existing view from Back Mountain Road near Dead Horse Lane

Figure 10 shows the location of viewpoint 04. Viewpoint 04 is situated approximately 150 m from the Project on Dead Horse Lane and is facing east. It is representative of Dead Horse Lane Road users, and workers and residents in the surrounding residential and farmland areas. While glimpses of views may occur during the construction phase due to the presence of construction vehicles and machinery, it is expected that the overall impact of the Project on viewpoint 04 would be Moderate-Low, as the sensitivity to change is low and the magnitude of change Moderate. It is expected that the proposed 30 metre vegetated buffer would screen views during the operation phase.

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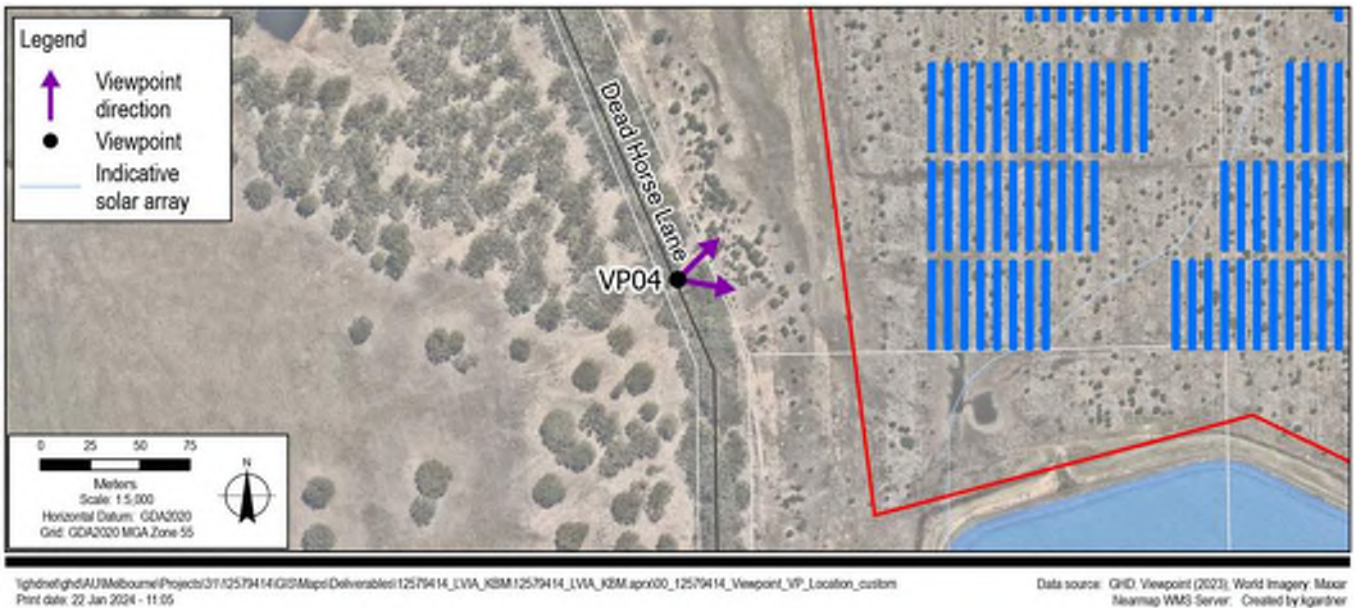


Figure 10 Viewpoint 04 location

Figure 11 shows the proposed view from Dead Horse Lane from viewpoint 04.



Figure 11 Proposed view from Dead Horse Lane viewpoint 04

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Figure 12 shows a redline overlay at viewpoint 04. A redline overlay illustrates the Project's location within the landscape. This overlay is strategically employed in cases where views may be obscured by topography, vegetation, or the position of the viewpoint, providing an understanding of the project's integration into the surrounding landscape.



Figure 12 Redline overlay at viewpoint 04

Figure 13 shows the location of viewpoint 05. Viewpoint 05 is situated approximately 250 m from the Project on Dead Horse Lane and is facing east. This viewpoint is representative of road users on Dead Horse Lane and workers and residents in the surrounding residential and farmland areas. While glimpses of views may occur during the construction phase due to the presence of construction vehicles and machinery, it is expected that proposed 30 m vegetated buffer would screen views during the operation phase and therefore the overall impact of the project on viewpoint 05 is assessed as Low.



Figure 13 Viewpoint 05 location

Figure 14 shows the proposed view from Dead Horse Lane from viewpoint 05.

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Figure 14 Proposed view from Dead Horse Lane view point 05

Figure 15 shows the redline overlay at viewpoint 05.



Figure 15 Redline overlay at viewpoint 05

4.5.3 Mitigation measures

Mitigation measures that respond to issues arising within the assessment that have potential to adversely impact on the character of the landscape or views from nearby sensitive visual receptors are listed below. These mitigation recommendations address the most visual elements of the Project as well as referencing any relevant considerations drawn from the legislation and policy review.

General considerations for the detailed design phase include:

- Utilise design strategies to minimise the visual prominence of new components affecting views to and from Back Mountain Road, Dead Horse Lane and Avenel Road.
- Ensure Project design, siting and materiality is of high quality and sympathetic to the existing context of the landscape and contributes positively to the existing landscape character values.

On-site mitigation recommendations include:

- Retain vegetation, particularly the mature avenues trees on the boundary of Dead Horse Lane, as they screen the Project. The buffer zone has been set back from the property boundary, allowing for existing vegetation to be retained.
- Perimeter screen planting around the western boundary of the Project, within the proposed 30 metre wide 'vegetation buffer zone', is recommended. The Project has partially exposed boundaries to the west to Dead Horse Lane, and to Back Mountain Road to the north. The solar PV array, ancillary infrastructure and wire fence are located approximately 100 metres from the western boundary on the Dead Horse Lane side. Planting within the proposed 30 metre minimum buffer zone will mitigate impacts to VP04 and VP05, the

receptors with the highest level of visual impact (See Figure 10 to Figure 15 above). The low-profile form of the majority of the Project, primarily the solar array, will allow for planting to provide screening within a relatively short period of time.

- The 30-metre vegetation buffer should be planted with a mixture of tall tree species and lower shrub planting, providing a dense screen of native planting, across a range of different heights. Ideally, this 30-metre perimeter vegetation buffer should be planted as part of the early works, so that any construction-phase impacts can also be partially screened and partially mitigated.
- Material selection. Although the majority of the Project is of a low profile, with a reflective finish through necessity, taller elements such as administrative building and switch room should be clad with non-reflective materials and be finished in a natural or neutral colour, as found in the landscape of the setting.

Construction activity and storage recommendations:

- Take all practical measures to ensure construction equipment, stockpiles of stored materials, and other visible elements located in the construction laydown area near the sensitive receptors, particularly VP04 and VP05, are kept tidy and incorporate screening measures, where possible.
- Fencing for the compound site is to include hoarding or screening material
- The site compound will be kept tidy and general tidiness will be maintained at the end of each shift
- All materials and equipment will be stored within the site compound or within designated work areas

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5. Relevant guidelines for renewable energy installations

5.1 Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities (Country Fire Authority)

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Installations (CFA Specialist Risk and Fire Safety Unit, August 2023) provides details about standard measures and processes in relation to fire safety, risk and emergency management that should be considered when designing, constructing and operating new renewable energy facilities, and upgrading existing facilities.

GVW have consulted with the CFA regarding their requirements for this Project, no changes were required, and they were happy with the scope of works.

Bushfire Threat Assessment

The study site is within the Public Use Zone (PUZ) and is in a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA). The subject land is also impacted by the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). The BMO is defined as land that may be significantly impacted by extreme bushfires under Clause 44.06 of the Victorian Planning Scheme.

The nearby surrounding land is within the Farming Zone and predominately consists of lightly treed grasslands used for agricultural and grazing practices and represents a lower bushfire hazard vegetation type. The terrain is largely flat to gently undulating topography.

Under the CFA Guidelines the land on which the proposed solar farm development is located is considered to meet the high bushfire risk location attributes contained within Section 4 of the CFA Guidelines, including being situated within a BMO and BPA. Planning applications for all renewable energy facilities within a high-risk environment must address the requirements of Section 4.1.1 of the Guidelines, outlined in Table 9 below. Vegetation throughout the facility must be managed in line with planning permit conditions and Section 6.2 of the Guideline.

CFA Renewable Energy Fire Design Requirements

The proposed Seymour solar farm layout has a potential generating capacity of no greater than 5MW and is therefore required to meet the design guidelines and model requirements stipulated for Micro Solar Facilities.

The design requirements under Section 4 the CFA Guidelines that warrant addressing are:

- High-risk Environments (Section 4.1.1)
- Emergency Vehicle Access (Section 4.2.1)
- Firefighting Water Supply (Section 4.2.2)
- Fire Detection and Suppression Equipment (Section 4.2.3)
- Landscape Screening and On-Site Vegetation (Section 4.2.4)
- Fire Breaks (Section 4.2.5)
- Design specific to facility type (Section 4.2.6)

Table 9 describes how the Project meets the compliance requirements of Section 4 of the CFA Guidelines.

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Table 9 CFA Guidelines Section 4 Assessment

Model Criteria (CFA Guidelines 2023)	Requirement	Compliance
Section 4.1.1 High-risk Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An assessment against policy at Clause 13.02-1S (Bushfire Planning) where the facility is located in a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA). - The impact of any ignitions arising from the infrastructure (solar panels, wind turbines, battery energy storage systems, electrical infrastructure) on nearby communities, infrastructure and assets. - The impact of bushfire on the infrastructure (e.g. ember attack, radiant heat impact, flame contact). - Assessment of whether the proposal will lead to an increase in risk to adjacent land and how the proposal will reduce risks on site to an acceptable level. 	<p>An assessment of the Project against Clause 13.02-1S is provided in section 6.4 of this report.</p> <p>CFA has been consulted as part of the development of the proposal, and the impacts of ignitions and bushfires considered.</p> <p>Bushfire planning and potential for fire impacts on nearby properties has been considered in the location of the panels and access roads. Perimeter and roads within the facility provide access to all infrastructure for emergency services.</p>
Section 4.2.1 Emergency vehicle (Fire truck) access	The CFA guidelines specify a minimum of two access points.	Two access points are provided, one at Back Mountain Road, and a secondary emergency access point via the adjacent Seymour Waste Management Facility site at Tarcombe Road.
Section 4.2.2 Firefighting water supply	For micro solar facilities, up to and including 5MW without battery storage, fire water of not less than 22,500 litres effective capacity may be provided. Fire water tank(s) must be located at the primary vehicle access point to the facility.	<p>A 45,000-litre firefighting water storage tank is proposed above ground near the primary entrance to the site.</p> <p>Water access points are clearly accessible and unobstructed.</p>
Section 4.2.3 Fire Detection and Suppression Equipment	The CFA guidelines specify that fire detection and suppression equipment must be provided at the facility.	A site for suitable fire detection and suppression equipment has been provided for along the main access road.
Section 4.2.4 Landscape screening and on-site vegetation	<p>Any proposed or existing vegetation must be considered in the Risk Management Plan for its potential to intensify and propagate fire within and away from the site.</p> <p>Where landscape screening is required, for example, to screen visual impacts or to prevent visual glare from a solar energy facility, the design must consider any potential increase in fire risk due to the type (species), density, height, location and overall width of the screening.</p>	<p>The Project does not propose the planting of vegetation under solar panels.</p> <p>Landscape screening in the form of perimeter windrow planting is recommended by the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment along Dead Horse Lane and Back Mountain Road to reduce impacts from glare, however, this has not been proposed as part of the Project and no landscaping is specified in the concept design layout.</p>
Section 4.2.5 Fire breaks	A minimum requirement of a 10-metre fire break around the perimeter of the facility and control rooms, electricity compounds, substations and all other buildings on site.	A 30-metre fire break has been proposed around the perimeter of the facility from the vegetation screening inside the property boundary.
Section 4.2.6 Design specific to facility type	The CFA stipulates that a 6-metre separation between solar panel banks is required.	The solar farm will have a 6-metre separation between solar panel banks.

Table 10 describes how the Project meets the requirements of Section 6.2 of the Guideline.

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Table 10 CFA Guidelines Section 6.2 Assessment

Model Criteria (CFA Guidelines 2023)	Requirement	Compliance
Section 6.2.2 Vegetation management	Solar energy facilities must have grass maintained to no more than 100mm under solar panels during the Fire Danger Period.	O&M Contractor to provide maintenance plans and complete maintenance during operations Operators of solar energy facilities on grazed paddocks must ensure that if additional measures to maintain grass to this level are required, they are implemented prior to, and for the duration of the Fire Danger Period.

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6. Planning scheme provisions

The Project is subject to the provisions of the Mitchell Planning Scheme (the Scheme) and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act). This section outlines the planning provisions relevant to the Project and the planning permit approvals required.

6.1 Land use definition

The installation of a solar farm is defined as a ‘Solar energy facility’ pursuant to Clause 73.03 of the Scheme. A solar energy facility is defined as:

Land used to generate electricity from solar energy using ground-mounted photovoltaic and thermal technology, where the primary role is to export power to the electricity network.

It does not include the generation of electricity principally used for an existing use of land.

6.2 Responsible authority

Pursuant to Clause 72.01 of the Planning Scheme the Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority for:

- *Energy generation facility with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater*

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) assesses planning permit applications on behalf of the Minister for Planning for their determination.

6.3 Municipal planning strategy

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) incorporates the local vision and objectives of Council’s policies, acting as the local component of the Planning Policy Framework within the Scheme. Please see Table 11 for an assessment against the MPS.

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Table 11 Assessment of Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)

Clause	Response
Clause 02.01 Context	<p>Mitchell Shire’s southern boundary is within Melbourne’s Urban Growth Boundary and 40 kilometres north of the Melbourne CBD. The northern boundary extends beyond Seymour into the Goulburn Valley food bowl. It covers 2861 square kilometres of rural and urban land including part of Melbourne’s Northern Growth Corridor.</p> <p>Assets valued by Mitchell Shire residents are the country lifestyle, attractive rural landscapes, the sense of community well-being, relaxed style of living, access to trains and accessibility to Melbourne.</p> <p>There are diverse landscapes including sedimentary hills, dissected granite plateaus, undulating volcanic plains, and alluvial floodplains associated with major rivers and creeks. The eastern and western boundaries are forested highlands that provide for wildlife movement.</p> <p>The Project will be located on land reserved for public use that was previously used for the purpose of plantation trees, however, has been cleared of vegetation. Studies have indicated that there will be limited traffic increases on local roads and limited visual impacts (see Attachment 1, 2 and 3). Therefore, the Project is not expected to impact the country lifestyle and attractive rural landscapes.</p>
Clause 02.02 Vision	<p>Mitchell Shire is embarking upon a journey of significant growth. It will be recognised for achieving sustainable outcomes and prosperity for its distinctive communities.</p> <p>Mitchell will have capitalised on its natural advantages, its location and excellent infrastructure to attract employment and investment.</p> <p>The Project is consistent with this vision, in that it is an investment in sustainable infrastructure.</p>

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Clause	Response
Clause 02.03-2 Environmental and landscape values	Council is committed to protecting and enhancing remnant native vegetation. Fieldwork conducted by GHD ecologists confirms that the site is highly disturbed because of the Blue Gum plantation removal. Some areas were mulched and are dominated by regrowth whereas areas without mulch lack regrowth and are mostly dominated by a mix of native and introduced ground covers and scattered native shrubs. Long-narrow piles of woody debris and scattered remains (e.g. tree stumps, root and trunks) of plantation material are common across the site. Native vegetation is mostly restricted to the roadside reserve. The proposed solar farm use will not hinder Councils endeavours to protect and enhance native vegetation.

6.4 Planning policy framework

The Planning Policy Framework (PPF) seeks to ensure that the objectives of planning in Victoria (as set out in Section 4 of the Act) are fostered through appropriate land use and development planning policies. The State, regional and local planning policies considered relevant to this Project are discussed below.

Clause 12.01-1S Protection of biodiversity

The objective of Clause 12.01-1S is *to protect and enhance Victoria's biodiversity.*

Relevant strategies include:

- *Avoid impacts of land use and development on important areas of biodiversity*
- *Assist in the identification, protection and management of important areas of biodiversity*

The study site comprises of cleared land that was previously used as a tree plantation. Removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation that is regrowth within the plantation boundaries is exempt from requiring a planning permit. However, an assessment by GHD ecologists determined the project will require removal of less than 5 hectares of native vegetation in a local category 2 to potential biodiversity impacts in road reserves (see Attachment 5). This means the Project must follow the intermediate pathway for vegetation removal in those road reserves, and offsets must be obtained prior to commencing work.

Clause 12.01-2S Native vegetation management

The objective of Clause 12.01-2S is *to ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity as a result of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation.*

Relevant strategies include:

- *Avoid the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation.*
- *Minimise impacts from the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation that cannot be avoided.*
- *Provide an offset to compensate for the biodiversity impact from the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation.*

An assessment by GHD ecologists confirmed that remaining native vegetation consists of remnant patches of Box Ironbark Forest (EVC 61) within the roadside reserve, and scattered remnant trees (Plains Grassy Woodland (EVC 55)), and small patches of derived Plains Grassy Wetland (EVC 125). A total of 0.179 ha of vegetation is proposed to be impacted by the works.

To avoid and minimise impacts to native vegetation three potential layout options for the solar array were considered by GVW for the site, and GHD ecologists provided advice on those options relating to minimising the impacts on native vegetation and fauna habitat.

Offsets are calculated within the native vegetation removal report (NVRP) based on the habitat hectare score recorded at the site. A total of 0.072 general habitat units (GHU) with a minimum strategic biodiversity value of 0.287 must be secured from the Mitchell Shire Council or the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

Clause 12.05-2S Landscapes

The objective of 12.05-2S is *to protect and enhance significant landscapes and open spaces that contribute to character, identity and sustainable environments.*

The relevant strategies of this Clause relating to visual amenity, character and environment include:

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- *Ensure development does not detract from the natural qualities of significant landscape areas*
- *Improve the landscape qualities, open space linkages and environmental performance in significant landscapes and open spaces, including green wedges, conservation areas and non-urban areas*
- *Recognise the natural landscape for its aesthetic value and as a fully functioning system*
- *Ensure important natural features are protected and enhanced*

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Solar Glare Assessment has been conducted by GHD (see Attachment 1 and Attachment 2, respectively). The Solar Glare Assessment concluded that the glare caused by the solar farm will be minimal. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment concluded that the solar farm has a moderate-low to negligible impact regarding the visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

Clause 13.02-1S Bushfire planning

Clause 13.02-1S is applicable to the Project as the site is within the BMO and is almost entirely within a designated bushfire prone area.

The objective of Clause 13.02-1S is *to strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.*

The relevant strategies include:

- *Consulting with emergency management agencies and the relevant fire authority early in the process to receive their recommendations and implement appropriate bushfire protection measures.*

The study site is within a designated Bushfire Prone Area and Bushfire Management Overlay. Throughout the planning process, the CFA recommendations have assisted in shaping the standard measures and processes in relation to fire safety, risk and emergency management that have been considered when designing the proposed works.

The proposed works will see 30 metre breaks implemented around the perimeter of the facility from the vegetation screening as well as 6 metre separations between solar panel rows. Further, the location of accessways will ensure appropriate bushfire management protection measures are implemented which will contribute to a resilient and safe community.

Clause 14.01-1S Protection of Agricultural Land

The objective of Clause 14.01-1S is *to protect the state's agricultural base by preserving productive farmland.*

Relevant strategies include:

- *Identify areas of productive agricultural land, including land for primary production and intensive agriculture.*
- *Consider state, regional and local, issues and characteristics when assessing agricultural quality and productivity.*
- *Avoid permanent removal of productive agricultural land from the state's agricultural base without consideration of the economic importance of the land for the agricultural production and processing sectors.*
- *In considering a proposal to use, subdivide or develop agricultural land, consider the:*
 - *Compatibility between the proposed or likely development and the existing use of the surrounding land.*

The study site was previously used for plantation trees, but is now largely cleared of vegetation. The surrounding land is agricultural, and a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, Traffic Assessment and Glare Assessment have indicated that there will be limited impact on nearby land users. The study site is not within the Farming Zone and a solar farm will not impact the agricultural values of the surrounding lots which are in the Farming Zone.

Implementing renewable energy sources is of economic importance and will assist the region and surrounding farms to meet their energy needs. Due to the works occurring within a small area, 21.70 hectares (see Figure 1 above), and the surrounding landscape being agricultural in nature, the Project is not expected to contribute to the loss of agricultural land.

Clause 15.03-2S Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

The objective of Clause 15.03-2S is *to ensure the protection and conservation of places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.*

Relevant strategies include:

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- Identify, assess and document places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance, in consultation with relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties, as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme.
- Provide for the protection and conservation of pre-contact and post-contact Aboriginal cultural heritage places.

The site is not within an area of Aboriginal cultural heritage. A Cultural Heritage Due Diligence Assessment (CHDDA) undertaken by GHD in 2023 found that the property is not within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity as defined by the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, and there are no known Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR) registered Aboriginal places within the site. Section 4.1 provides more details about the Aboriginal heritage assessment.

Clause 19.01-1S Energy Supply

The objective of Clause 19.01-1S is to facilitate appropriate development of energy supply infrastructure.

Relevant strategies include:

- Support the development of energy generation, storage, transmission, and distribution infrastructure to transition to a low-carbon economy.
- Develop appropriate infrastructure to meet community demand for energy services.
- Ensure energy generation, storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure and projects are resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Facilitate the production and distribution of zero emission gases and fuels.
- Support energy infrastructure projects in locations that minimise land use conflicts and that take advantage of existing resources and infrastructure networks.
- Facilitate energy infrastructure projects that help diversify local economies and improve sustainability and social outcomes.
- Facilitate renewable energy generation and storage to meet on-site energy needs.

The Project aligns with the strategies established in Clause 19.01-1S through the prospective solar farm distributing clean energy. All energy generated from the facility will be distributed to the national electricity transmission network.

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6.5 Planning controls

An assessment of the Project against the applicable zones, overlays, and particular provisions of the Scheme is presented below.

6.5.1 Planning zone

Clause 36.01 Public Use Zone (PUZ)

The site is located within the Public Use Zone 1 (Service and Utility) (PUZ1).

The purpose of the Public Use Zone is:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.
- To recognise public land use for public utility and community services and facilities.
- To provide for associated uses that are consistent with the intent of the public land reservation or purpose.

The use is being carried out by GVW, who own the land and are the public land manager (PLM).

As a solar energy facility, the Project is not consistent with the purpose described in the table to Clause 36.01-6 for PUZ1, which is Service and Utility. As the condition for any other use in Clause 36.01-1 is not met by virtue of the Project not meeting the purpose of the PUZ1 (Service and Utility), the use of the land for a solar energy facility is a Section 2 use, and a permit is required for the use. A permit is also required to construct a building or construct or carry out works for any use in Section 2 of Clause 36.01-1.

The application requirements and decision guidelines of clause 36.01 are addressed in section 7.1.

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The zone for the site is shown in Figure 16.



Figure 16 Planning zone

6.5.2 Planning overlays

This section identifies the overlays which apply to the study site:

Clause 42.02 Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO)

The Vegetation Protection Overlay Schedule 1 applies to the northern and western boundaries of the site, following Dead Horse Lane and Back Mountain Road, as shown in Figure 17 below. The purpose of the VPO is:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.
- To protect areas of significant vegetation.
- To ensure that development minimises loss of vegetation.
- To preserve existing trees and other vegetation.
- To recognise vegetation protection areas as locations of special significance, natural beauty, interest and importance.
- To maintain and enhance habitat and habitat corridors for indigenous fauna.
- To encourage the regeneration of native vegetation.

Schedule 1 to the VPO (VPO1) applies in relation to Roadside and Corridor Protection. The Statement of Nature and Significance of Vegetation to be Protected states that roadsides vegetation and wildlife corridors are a significant feature of the Mitchell Shire as many of these areas contain pockets of remnant indigenous vegetation, rare, vulnerable and significant flora species. The VPO1 vegetation protection objectives to be achieved are to:

- Protect and preserve indigenous vegetation and rare and endangered flora and fauna species on linear reserves
- Achieve high landscape quality on roadsides

- Maintain and enhance habitat and corridor requirements for indigenous fauna

The following exemption for Regrowth in Clause 42.02-3 Table of exemptions apply to this Project, where vegetation to be removed is regrowth within the previous plantation boundary:

Vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped that has naturally established or regenerated on land lawfully cleared of naturally established vegetation, and is:

- bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*); or
- within the boundary of a timber production plantation, as indicated on a Plantation Development Notice or other documented record, and has established after the plantation.

An Ecology assessment identified native vegetation within the road reserves, within the extent of the VPO1 (along the western and northern perimeter of the site) which will be impacted by the Project. A site assessment conducted by GHD ecologists confirms that impacts the native vegetation associated with the Project would include the removal of 0.179 hectares of native vegetation from two road reserves within the extent of the VPO1 (along the western and northern perimeter of the site). Therefore, pursuant to Clause 42.02, a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.

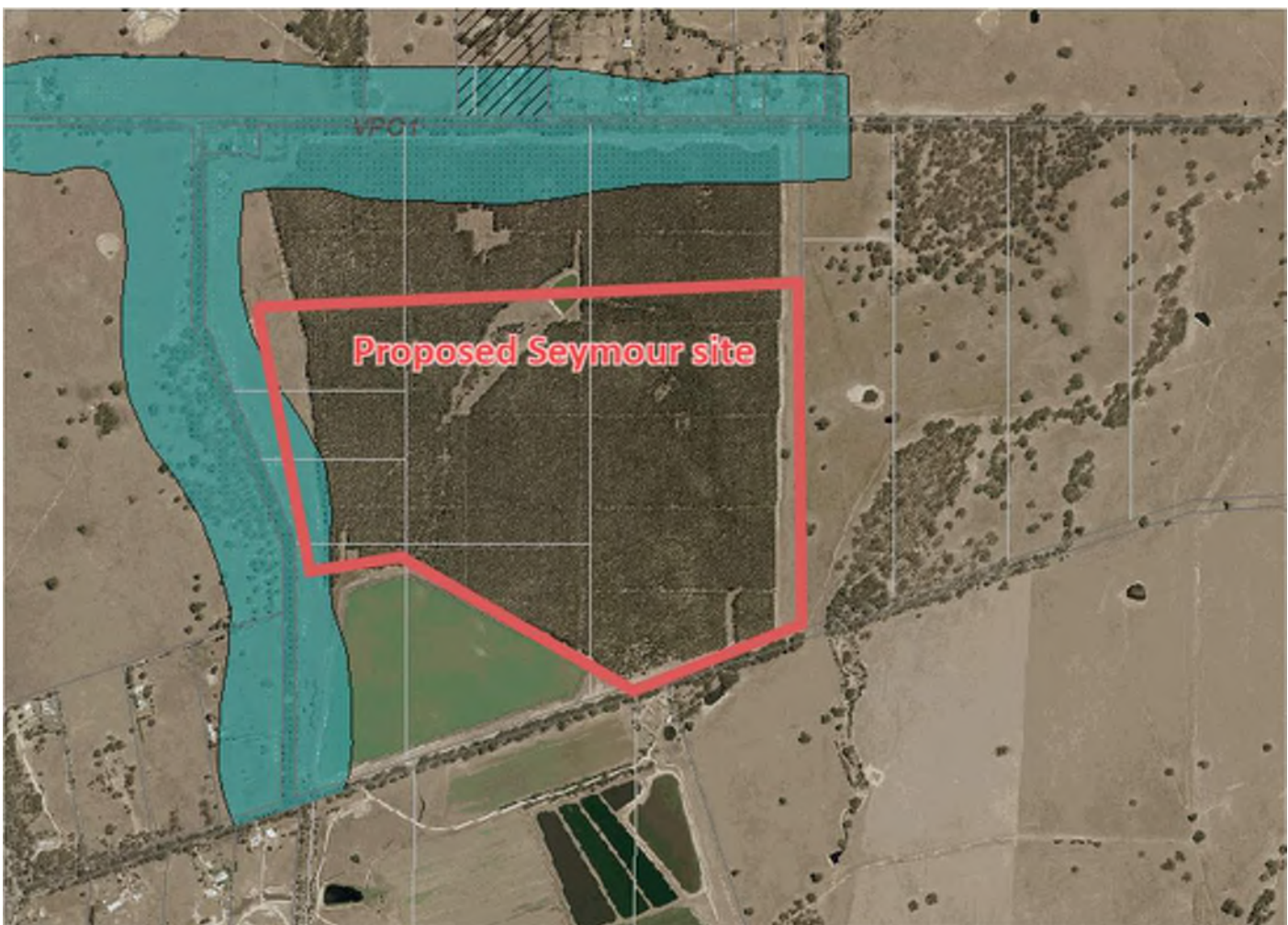


Figure 17 Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO1)

The location of vegetation that may be impacted is shown in Figure 18.

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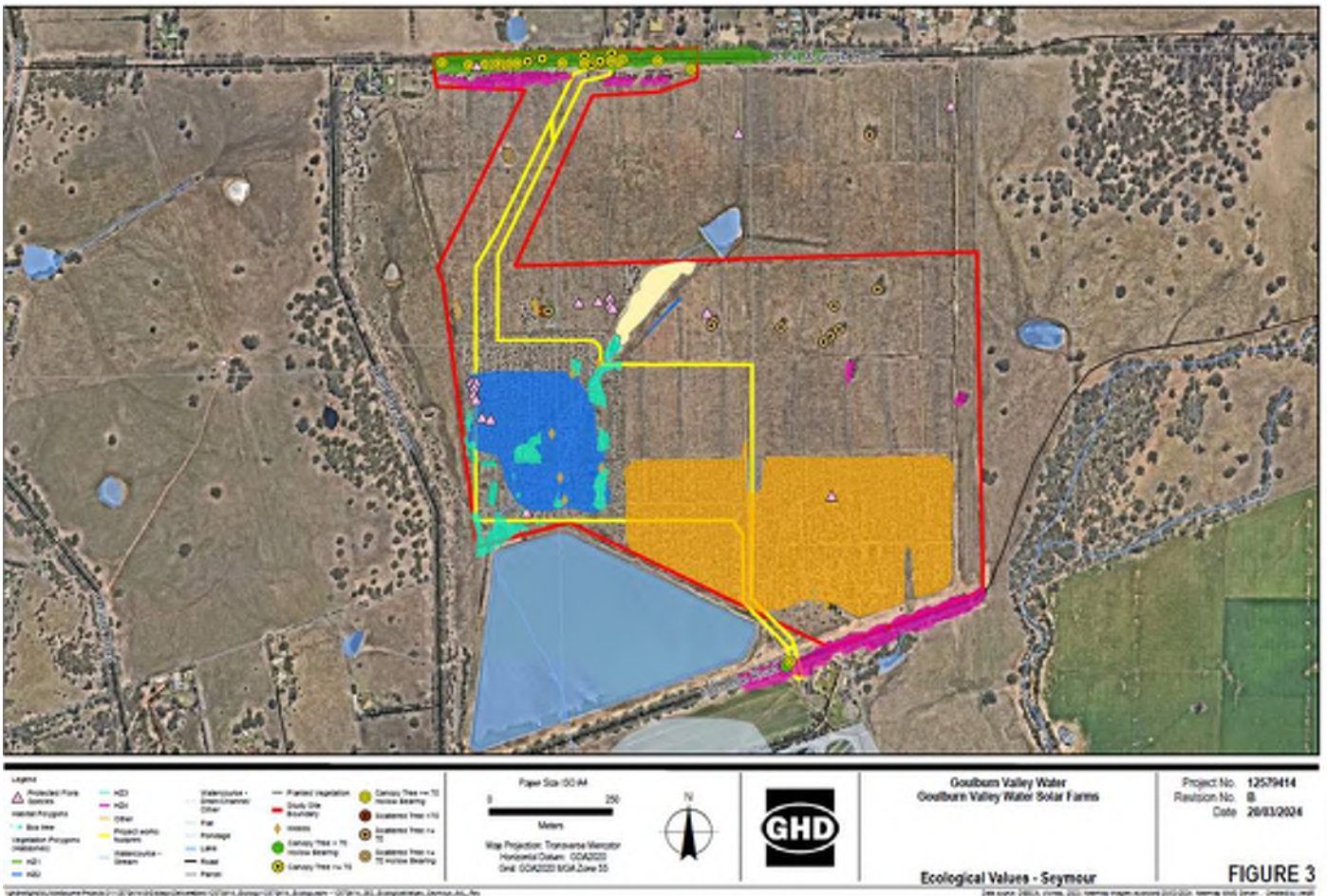


Figure 18 Location of vegetation

Clause 44.06 Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)

The BMO affects the entire site except the water detention area located at the southwestern corner of the site as shown in Figure 19.

The purpose of the BMO is:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.
- To ensure that the development of land prioritises the protection of human life and strengthens community resilience to bushfire
- To identify areas where the bushfire hazard warrants bushfire protection measures to be implemented
- To ensure development is only permitted where the risk to life and property from bushfire can be reduced to an acceptable level

A planning permit is not required to construct a building or construct or carry out works associated with the solar energy facility within the BMO as the use is not specified pursuant to clause 44.06-2.

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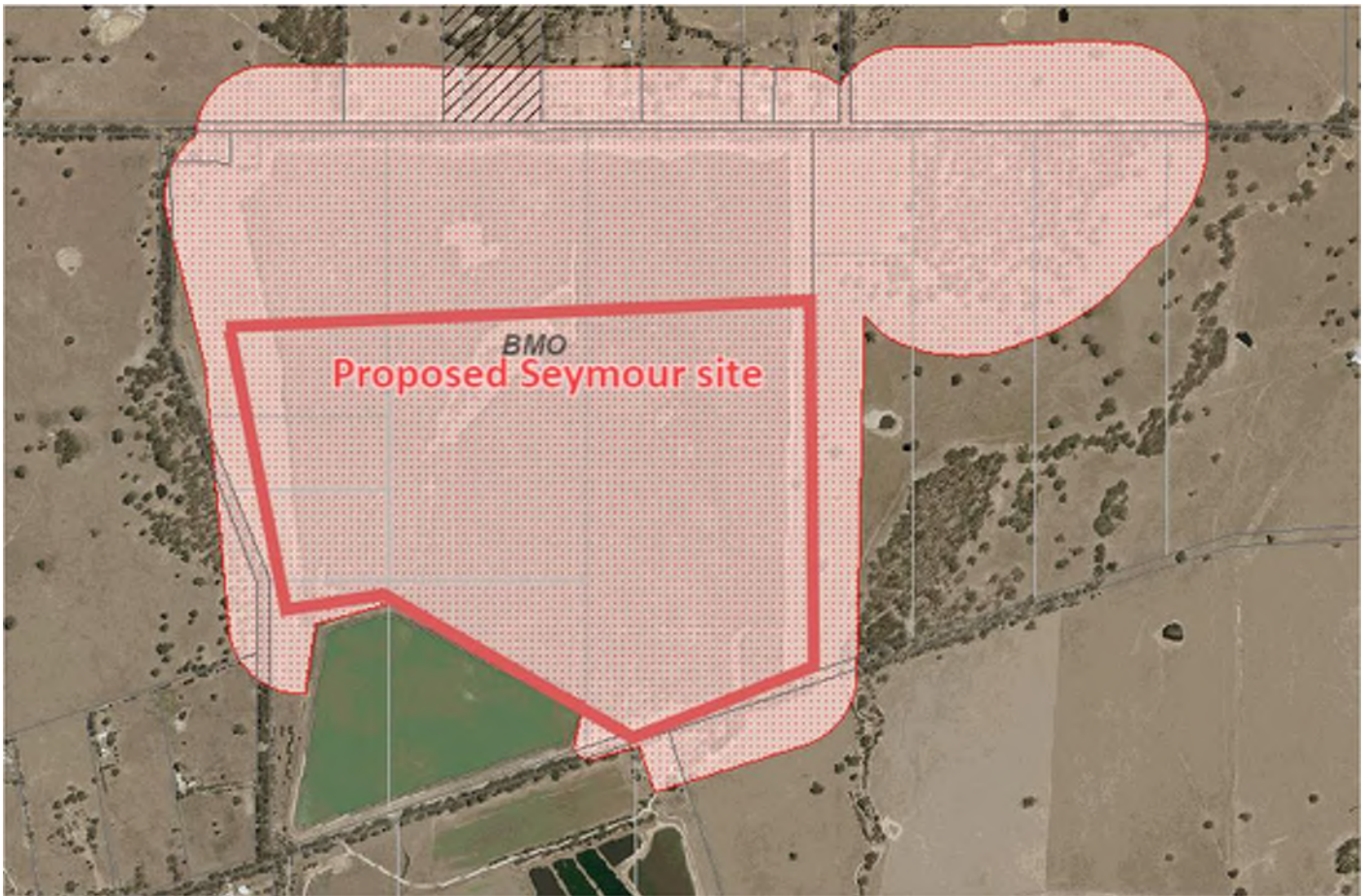


Figure 19 Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)

It is noted that the study site is located within a designated BPA as shown in Figure 20.

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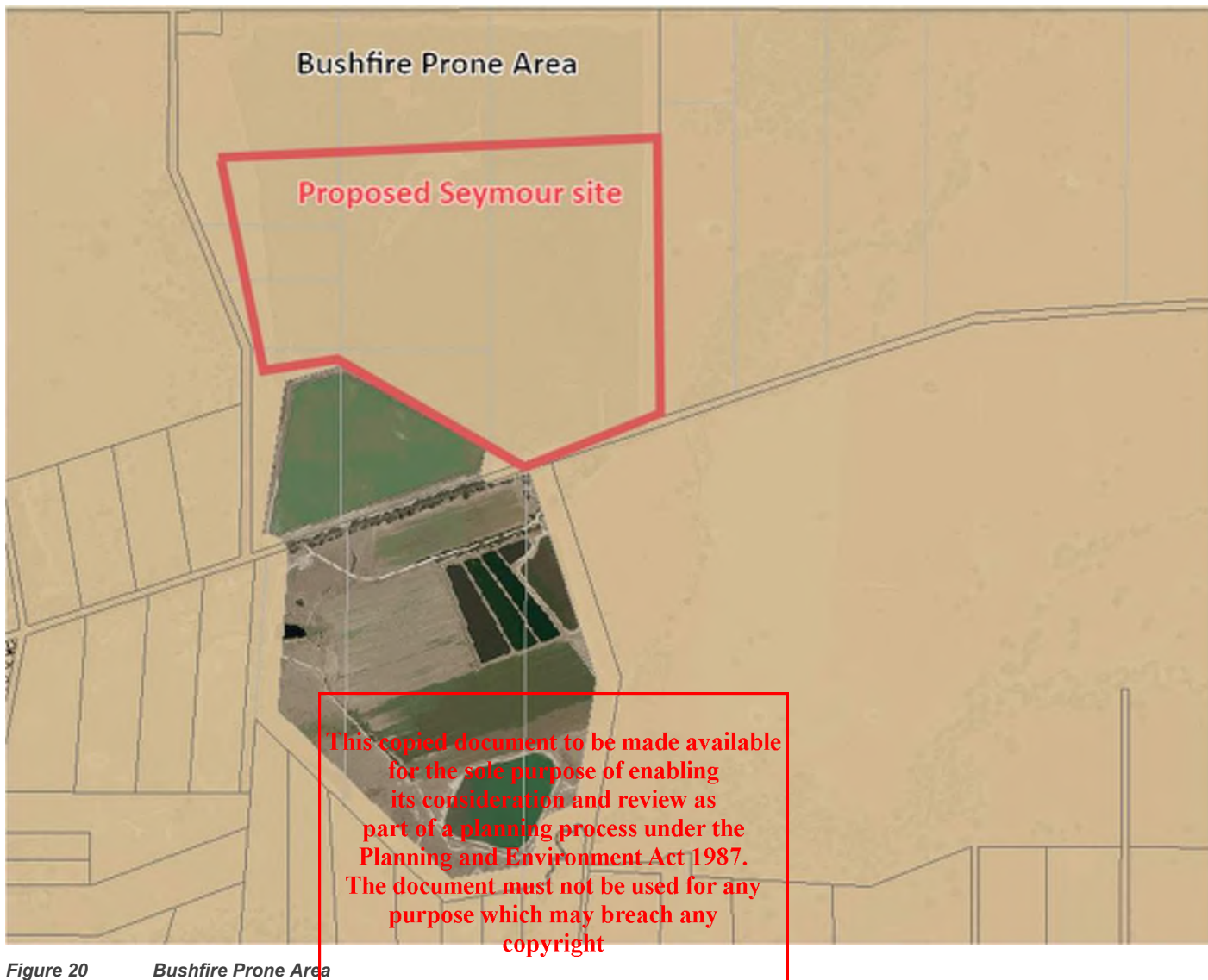


Figure 20 Bushfire Prone Area

The Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline notes that if a site is located within the BMO, a referral to a relevant fire management authority may be required as part of a planning permit application process. GWV have consulted with the CFA as part of the planning for the Project. Development within a BPA is subject to fire management requirements linked with the *Building Act 1993*.

6.5.3 Particular provisions

The following particular provisions apply to the Project.

Clause 52.06 Car parking

The purpose of Clause 52.06 is:

- *To ensure that car parking is provided in accordance with the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *To ensure the provision of an appropriate number of car parking spaces having regard to the demand likely to be generated, the activities on the land and the nature of the locality.*
- *To support sustainable transport alternatives to the motor car.*
- *To promote the efficient use of car parking spaces through the consolidation of car parking facilities.*
- *To ensure that car parking does not adversely affect the amenity of the locality.*
- *To ensure that the design and location of car parking is of a high standard, creates a safe environment for users and enables easy and efficient use.*

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A renewable energy facility is not listed in Clause 52.06-5, Table 1. Pursuant to clause 52.06-6, where a use of land is not specified in Table 1, car parking spaces must be provided to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

Plans must be provided to the Responsible Authority under Clause 52.06-8 wherever Clause 52.06 applies, whether or not a permit application is being made under Clause 52.06-3 or any other provision of the Scheme. Information required under Clause 52.06-8 may be included in other plans submitted with the application. It is proposed that the Project will include the implementation of six car spaces and would therefore be deemed to be to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

Clause 52.17 Native vegetation

The purpose of Clause 52.17 is:

- *To ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity as a result of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. This is achieved by applying the following three step approach in accordance with the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017) (the Guidelines):*
 1. *Avoid the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation.*
 2. *Minimise impacts from the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation that cannot be avoided.*
 3. *Provide an offset to compensate for the biodiversity impact if a permit is granted to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.*
- *To manage the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation to minimise land and water degradation.*

Under Clause 52.17-2, a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation.

Vegetation impacts within the plantation boundaries are exempt from planning permit requirements under 52.17, as per the Regrowth exemption for regrowth vegetation within the boundaries of a registered timber plantation. A site assessment conducted by GHD ecologists confirmed that impacts from the Project would include the removal of 0.179 hectares of native vegetation from two road reserves. Therefore, pursuant to Clause 52.17-2 a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.

Clause 53.13 Renewable energy facility

The purpose of Clause 53.13 is:

- *To facilitate the establishment and expansion of renewable energy facilities, in appropriate locations, with minimal impact on the amenity of the area*

Clause 53.13 applies to an application for a planning permit for the use and development of land for the purpose of a solar energy facility. Details of the information required to support an application under this clause are provided in section 7.1.4.

Clause 53.22 Significant economic development

The purpose of Clause 53.22 is:

- *To prioritise and facilitate the planning, assessment and delivery of projects that will make a significant contribution to Victoria's economy and provide substantial public benefit, including jobs for Victorians.*
- *To provide for the efficient and effective use of land and facilitate use and development with high quality urban design, architecture and landscape architecture.*

This Project constitutes a renewable energy facility with a capacity of greater than 1 megawatt, which is a use defined in Table 2 of Clause 53.22-1. The clause is relevant to this Project, because:

- *The responsible authority may waive or vary any building height or setback requirement.*
- *An application is exempt from an application requirement in this planning scheme if in the opinion of the responsible authority the information is not relevant to the assessment of the application.*

Further, Clause 53.22-3 notes that in addition to the application requirements elsewhere in the planning scheme, an application must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate:

This document is exempt from planning permit requirements under 52.17, as per the Regrowth exemption for regrowth vegetation within the boundaries of a registered timber plantation. A site assessment conducted by GHD ecologists confirmed that impacts from the Project would include the removal of 0.179 hectares of native vegetation from two road reserves. Therefore, pursuant to Clause 52.17-2 a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.

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- *A quantity surveyor report prepared by a suitably qualified person specifying the estimated cost of the development.*
- *Written advice of the Chief Executive Officer, Invest Victoria.*

The quantity surveyor report is not considered appropriate at this stage, as the development plans were prepared prior to gazettal of VC261.

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7. Planning assessment

An overview of the applicable planning controls and approval requirements for the study site is presented in Table 12 below and further outlined in the preceding sections.

Table 12 Planning Approvals Required

Planning provision	Planning approval	Referral	Approval trigger
Clause 36.01 Public Use Zone	Yes	No	Use and development of land for a solar energy facility
Clause 42.02 Vegetation Protection Overlay 1	Yes	No	To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation that is not exempt under Clause 42.02-3 Table of exemptions for vegetation that is regrowth within the previous plantation boundary. Removal of native vegetation from road reserves will require a planning permit.
Clause 44.06 Bushfire Management Overlay	No	No	The use of a renewable energy facility is not listed in this clause so a planning permit is not required pursuant to clause 44.06-2.
Clause 52.06 Car parking	Yes	No	Car parking must be provided to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority
Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation	Yes	No	To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation that is not exempt under Clause 52.17-7 Table of exemptions for vegetation that is regrowth within the previous plantation boundary. Removal of native vegetation from road reserves will require a planning permit.
Clause 53.13 – Renewable energy facility	Yes	No	An application for a solar facility must meet application requirements set out in Clause 53.13
Clause 53.22 – Significant Economic Development	No	No	This clause supports the prompt development of renewable energy facilities. Applications for these uses will need to meet the requirements of notice under section 52 of the Act, enabling people to have their say or object to a proposal, however, the applications will be exempt from review rights to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on any decision to grant a permit, enabling prompt decisions and projects to proceed more quickly.

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7.1 Application requirements and decision guidelines

7.1.1 Clause 36.01 Public Use Zone (PUZ)

A response to the application requirements of the PUZ is set out in Table 13 below.

Table 13 PUZ application requirements

Application requirement	Response
<p>An application for a permit by a person other than the relevant public land manager must be accompanied by the written consent of the public land manager, indicating that the public land manager consents generally or conditionally either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the application for permit being made. To the application for permit being made and to the proposed use or development. 	<p>The application is being made by GVV who own the land and are the PLM. Therefore, written consent is not required.</p>

Responses to the decision guidelines of the PUZ are provided in Table 14 below.

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Table 14 PUZ decision guidelines

Decision guideline	Response
<i>The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.</i>	The Project is consistent with the MPS and PPF, as discussed in Sections 6.3 and 6.4. The Project adheres to the MPS as the land use being used as a solar farm compliment the vision established by Council, by using land that was previously used for plantation trees, and having minimal impacts on the road networks and valued rural views. The Project responds well to the PPF by providing clean infrastructure investment and minimal native vegetation removal. GVW have consulted with the CFA regarding bushfire management.
<i>The comments of any Minister or public land manager having responsibility for the care or management of the land or adjacent land.</i>	GVW are the public land manager with responsibility for the care and management of the land. The location of the Seymour solar farm is appropriate, being surrounded by large paddocks, and is therefore unlikely to interfere with how the surrounding lots are used. Further, the CFA have been involved in preapplication meetings in which they have acknowledged that they support the land use being used for a solar farm facility and adhering to relevant policies.
<i>Whether the development is appropriately located and designed, including in accordance with any relevant use, design or siting guidelines.</i>	The Project is considered appropriately designed and located on a site outside of Seymour and surrounded by agricultural land. GVW have consulted with the CFA and the Project design and siting is considered consistent with the CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities.

7.1.2 Clause 42.02 Vegetation protection overlay (VPO1)

There are no application requirements associated with the VPO schedule 1. Responses to the decision guidelines of the VPO1 are provided in Table 15 below.

Table 15 VPO1 decision guidelines

Decision guideline	Response
<i>The conservation and enhancement of the area.</i>	The site is cleared plantation land with only minimal vegetation remaining, mostly in road reserves. The solar panel layout has been designed to avoid this vegetation as much as possible and to maintain the overland flow of the water from the dam.
<i>The preservation of, and impact on, the natural environment or landscape values</i>	The site is cleared plantation land with only minimal vegetation remaining. The panel layout has been designed to avoid this vegetation as much as possible and to maintain the overland flow of the water from the dam.
<i>The role of native vegetation in conserving the flora and fauna and in providing food, shade and shelter for native fauna</i>	Not applicable.
<i>The need to retain native vegetation if it is rare or supports rare species of flora or fauna and where it forms part of a wildlife corridor</i>	No EPBC Act or FFG Act threatened species were observed during the site assessment within the study site or proposed development area.
<i>Whether provision is made or is to be made to establish and maintain native vegetation elsewhere on the land</i>	The layout of the solar panels has been designed to maintain vegetation around the dam near the centre of the study site.
<i>The sensitive location of driveways or crossings over roadside reserves</i>	GHD ecologists provided advice on design options to minimise impacts on native vegetation and fauna habitat. These included altering access routes to utilise existing gates, and changing the routes of internal roads to avoid large remnant trees.
<i>The Mitchell Shire Roadside Conservation Surveys (1993-2002)</i>	Three potential layout options for the solar array were considered by GVW, and GHD ecologists provided advice on those options relating to the minimisation of impacts on native vegetation and fauna habitat, including altering access routes to utilise existing gates. Impacts to remnant vegetation are limited to the widening of access tracks and gates at road reserves at the northern and southern boundaries of the site.

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7.1.3 Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation

A response to the application requirements of Clause 52.17 is set out in Table 16 below.

Table 16 Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation application requirements

Application requirement	Response
An application to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation must comply with the application requirements specified in the Guidelines (Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017)).	The Project will involve limited removal of native vegetation within road reserves, consistent with the Intermediate Pathway, as the vegetation impact is <0.5 hectares and the study site falls within a Location Category 2. The regrowth exemption in the Table of exemptions at Clause 52.17-7 applies to the Project. Only native vegetation impacted in the road reserves requires a permit.

Responses to the decision guidelines of Clause 52.17 are provided in Table 17 below.

Table 17 Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation decision guidelines

Decision guideline	Response
If a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, the biodiversity impacts from the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation must be offset, in accordance with the Guidelines. The conditions on the permit for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation must specify the offset requirement and the timing to secure the offset.	Only native vegetation impacted in the road reserves requires a permit. Offsets have been calculated in Appendix E of the Ecology Assessment (Attachment 5). The general offset amount is 0.072 general habitat units.

7.1.4 Clause 53.13 Renewable energy facility

Clause 53.13 Renewable energy facility requires that an application to use and develop land for the purpose of a solar energy facility must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate (shown in Table 18):

Table 18 Clause 53.13 Renewable energy facility application requirements

Requirement	Response
<p>A site and context analysis, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A site plan, photographs or other techniques to accurately describe the site and the surrounding area. A location plan showing the full site area, local electricity grid, access roads to the site and direction and distance to nearby accommodation, hospital or education centre. 	<p>Figure 1 and Figure 2 of this report respond to the application requirement of demonstrating the context of the site and design response. These figures display the accessways of the site, the proximity of facilities to the site and where the prospective solar panels will be located on the site. Detailed development plans are attached at Attachment 6.</p> <p>Section 2 of this report provides a description of the site regarding its physical characteristics and proximity to nearby townships, education facilities and emergency services.</p>
<p>A design response, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed plans of the proposed development including, the layout and height of the facility and associated building and works, materials, reflectivity, colour, lighting, landscaping, the electricity distribution starting point (where the electricity will enter the distribution system), access roads and parking areas. Accurate visual simulations illustrating the development in the context of the surrounding area and from key public view points. The extent of vegetation removal and a rehabilitation plan for the site. 	<p>Please see Attachment 6 for detailed development plans.</p> <p>A Landscape and Visual Assessment is provided at Attachment 1 and summarised in section 4.5. This assessment illustrates the development in context of the surrounding area and public view points.</p> <p>Please refer to Attachment 5 for the Ecological Assessment responding to the extent of vegetation removal and rehabilitation plan.</p>

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Requirement	Response
<p><i>Written report and assessment, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>An explanation of how the proposed design derives from and responds to the site analysis.</i> – <i>A description of the proposal, including the types of process to be utilised, materials to be stored and the treatment of waste.</i> – <i>Whether a Development Licence, Operating Licence, Permit or Registration is required from the Environment Protection Authority.</i> – <i>the potential amenity impacts such as noise, glint, light spill, emissions to air, land or water, vibration, smell and electromagnetic interference.</i> – <i>the effect of traffic to be generated on roads.</i> – <i>the impact upon Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal cultural heritage.</i> – <i>the impact of the proposal on any species listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 or Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.</i> – <i>A statement of why the site is suitable for a renewable energy facility including, a calculation of the greenhouse benefits.</i> – <i>An environmental management plan including, a construction management plan, any rehabilitation and monitoring.</i> 	<p>A description of the proposal is provided in section 2.</p> <p>A Development Licence, Operating Licence, Permit or Registration is not required from the Environment Protection Authority.</p> <p>The potential amenity impacts including noise, glint and light spill are addressed in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2.</p> <p>Please refer to Attachment 3 for the effect of the proposed works on traffic in the region.</p> <p>No impact is expected on Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal cultural heritage. The site is not in a Heritage Overlay or a location of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.</p> <p>Please refer to Attachment 5 for the Ecological Assessment responding to the impact of the proposed work on species listed under the <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</i>. Attachment 5 also addresses the rehabilitation and monitoring that will be implemented to protect vegetation during construction.</p>

Responses to the decision guidelines of Clause 53.13 are provided in Table 19 below.

Table 19 Clause 53.13 Renewable energy facility decision guidelines

Decision guideline	Response
<p><i>The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.</i></p>	<p>The Project responds to the MPS and PPF is provided in Sections 6.1 and 6.2 of this report.</p>
<p><i>The effect of the proposal on the surrounding area in terms of noise, glint, light spill, vibration, smell and electromagnetic interference.</i></p>	<p>A solar glare assessment completed by GHD in January 2024 found that no red glare is predicted to occur at any point within the vicinity of the proposed Seymour solar farm and at any position relative to the proposed array there is no threat of permanent retinal damage to an observer.</p> <p>A small amount of yellow glare is expected to occur at the intersection of Avenel and Tarcombe Road, as well as at property located approximately 600 meters away from the south-west corner of the proposed PV installation. Mitigation measures have been suggested to reduce the impact of the glare on road users and property owners, however the risk of developing after-image due to the glare is relatively low.</p> <p>A large amount of green glare is predicted to occur across various route receptors and observer points, however there is low potential for after-image developing, and thus green glare is not perceived as a risk requiring any mitigation strategies. The full assessment is provided at Attachment 2.</p>
<p><i>The impact of the proposal on significant views, including visual corridors and sightlines.</i></p>	<p>A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment completed by GHD landscape architects in 2024 determined that the visual impacts range from moderate-low to negligible. The most significant impacts were moderate-low within the vicinity of Back Mountain Road and Dead Horse Lane due to the proximity of residents that place value upon the open rural landscape and enjoyment of views of their setting.</p> <p>The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is provided at Attachment 1.</p>
<p><i>The impact of the proposal on strategically important agricultural land.</i></p>	<p>The Project is located on a site that has previously been used for plantation timber, and the site is not considered to be strategically important agricultural land.</p>
<p><i>The impact of the proposal on the protection of declared irrigation districts.</i></p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

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Decision guideline	Response
<i>The impact of the proposal on the natural environment and natural systems.</i>	The Project is not expected to have a significant impact on the natural environment or systems, as the site is recently cleared of plantation timber. A small dam is on site and the natural overflows towards the south-west of the site will be avoided by the proposed layout. 0.179 hectares of vegetation will be impacted in road reserves.
<i>The impact of the proposal on the road network.</i>	The Project is expected to have minimal impacts on the road network. Analysis by GHD traffic engineers has determined that the proposed development construction is expected to generate up to 34 daily traffic movements during peak construction time. It is expected that traffic movements will be minimal during operation period. This is limited to staff and routine and emergency maintenance only and is expected to be in the order of approximately five vehicles per week. The traffic assessment is provided at Attachment 3.
<i>Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, October 2022).</i>	<p>This Project has considered clauses that the SEFDDG addressed as important, and these are outlined in section 2.1.1 of the report.</p> <p>This Project has considered the best practice for proponents of the SEFDDG by engaging stakeholders in the planning process. Please see section 3 of this report for a detailed response of stakeholder engagement in this Project.</p> <p>Considerable consideration has gone into the design of the solar facility in line with the SEFDDG. Refer to Attachment 1, 2 and 3, for the LVIA, Solar Glare Assessment and Traffic Impact Assessment respectively.</p> <p>No impact is expected on Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal cultural heritage as discussed in section 4.1 of this report. The site is not in a Heritage Overlay or a location of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.</p> <p>Based on this, the proposed solar energy facility is considered to be in line with the Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines.</p>

7.1.5 Clause 53.22 Significant economic development

Clause 53.22 Significant economic development requires that an application for the purpose of a renewable energy facility must be accompanied by the following information, as appropriate (shown in Table 20).

Table 20 Clause 53.22 Significant economic development application requirements

Requirement	Response
<i>A quantity surveyor report prepared by a suitably qualified person specifying the estimated cost of the development. For a development that includes more than one use, the report should specify the estimated cost of development for each use.</i>	The quantity surveyor report is not considered appropriate at this stage, as the development plans were prepared prior to gazettal of VC261
<i>Written advice of the Chief Executive Officer, Invest Victoria.</i>	Not required for a renewable energy facility.

Responses to the decision guidelines of Clause 53.22 are provided in Table 21 below.

Table 21 Clause 53.22 Significant economic development decision guidelines

Decision guideline	Response
<i>The purpose of the clause.</i>	The Project meets the purpose of the clause, in that it provides a substantial public benefit in the form of a new solar farm, which will provide the grid with renewable energy.
<i>The views of the Office of the Victorian Government Architect.</i>	It is considered that the Project will meet the views of the Victorian Government Architect, as the Project has been designed to meet the requirements of the CFA and consider the views of other stakeholders in its design.

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8. Conclusion

This application for a planning permit has been prepared by GHD on behalf of GVW for use and development of land for a solar energy facility.

This planning report has concluded that planning approval is required for use and development pursuant to:

- Clause 36.01 use and buildings and works within the PUZ1.
- Clause 42.02 for removal or destruction of native vegetation within the road reserve within the VPO1.
- Clause 52.06 for car parking to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- Clause 52.17 for removal or destruction of native vegetation within the road reserve.
- Clause 53.13 for land used for a renewable energy facility.

On balance, this application supports the recommendations established in the Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines and is considered consistent with the Mitchell Planning Scheme as follows:

- The Project will be sited on land which has been previously used for plantation trees, which is now largely cleared of vegetation. It is unlikely to impact on any threatened vegetation.
- A solar farm will support the national electricity transmission network by receiving all power that is generated by the solar facilities on the GVW owned site.
- The Project will support the Mitchell Council's vision of supporting excellent infrastructure to attract employment and investment outcomes within their municipality.
- The Project's design and use have been guided by several technical investigations and impact assessments in consultations with key stakeholders including the CFA, DEECA and Indigenous communities.
- The solar glare and landscape visual impacts are minimal and are unlikely to have any detrimental impact on adjoining properties or the landscape.
- The Project will generate very little increase in traffic, and therefore is considered to have no detrimental impact on the abutting roads.

Overall, we consider the Project to be consistent with the relevant provisions of the Scheme. The Project represents an appropriate and consistent development outcome in the context of the subject site and its surroundings. As such, we respectfully request that timely approval is granted.

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